

*Luigi Giussani:*  
*A Teacher in Dialogue with Modernity*

Robert Joseph Di Pede

Ph.D.  
The University of Edinburgh  
© 2010

I, Robert Joseph Di Pede, declare that I composed this thesis  
and that the work has not been submitted  
for any other degree or professional qualification.

Author's Signature:

---

29 September 2010

# Abstract

This thesis submits Luigi Giussani's theological writings to philosophical analysis. Giussani (born in Desio, 1922; died in Milan, 2005) was a prominent Italian author, public intellectual, university lecturer, and founder of the international Catholic lay movement Communion and Liberation (CL). My enquiry is motivated by the experience of readers who find Giussani's texts marked by vagueness and seeming inconsistencies despite his attempt to respond decisively and sensitively to real human problems. It also presents ideas from those works available only in Italian to an English-language readership for the first time. Rather than criticize the author's style of exposition, or restate his arguments in a manner more suited to my audience, I treat the texts' burdens as symptomatic of the author's deeper, unarticulated concerns. I reconstruct Giussani's implicit concerns using history, intellectual biography, sources, and the logic of enquiry itself. I then re-read his texts in the light of the explicit rendering of those concerns and, where the texts' burdens still persist, I suggest repairs corresponding to those concerns and to the errant behaviours his writings were generated to correct.

Three themes are examined: judgement, freedom, and beauty. These were prominent in Giussani's dialogue with students from the 1950s onward and integral to his idea of the religious education of youth. My analysis is conceived as a contribution to philosophical theology, rather than to the philosophy of education. The areas flagged for repair, however, may nonetheless serve educators. I conclude that Giussani's account is indeed shaped by his implicit concerns; that their nature provokes the essentialist arguments he mounts; and that his attempt to expound intrinsic, universal, and timeless claims runs against the pragmatic thrust of his writing. My repairs call for a better account of 1) practical deliberation, 2) discursive reason, 3) obedience in relation to autonomy, and 4) habits related to the formation of virtues. I argue that the practical grounds of his project are best anchored in robust solutions to the problems of ordinary life formulated from the deepest sources of repair from Giussani's tradition (sacred scripture and sacred tradition, including the liturgy) rather than what he calls the "needs and exigencies of the heart," which address a different problem (namely Enlightenment rationality or Neo-Thomism).

‘Has mankind failed the Church’ [...] ‘or has the Church failed mankind?’ [...] [N]owadays the Christian fact is proposed to the world in a profoundly reduced form. It is not what it should be; namely, the presence that battles against man’s destruction. If it is that presence, it is only so potentially. [...] The chief observation motivating such a judgement lies in the reduction of Christianity to ‘Word’ (‘Word of God,’ ‘Gospel,’ or simply, ‘Word’). This reduction entails certain consequences that are decisive for culture. — Luigi Giussani (1998)

For the students of *The Francis de Sales Centre* at  
Mary, Mother of God School



Luigi Giussani at the lighthouse of Portofino, Liguria in 1956 with students from the *lycée* Berchet. (Photo courtesy of Communion and Liberation Archives, Via Porpora 127, Milan).

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
Abbreviations	ix
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter One: Judgement</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Chapter Two: Freedom</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Beauty</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>242</b>
Appendix	257
Bibliography	266

# Acknowledgements

I wish to thank New College in the University of Edinburgh, Unite Group plc, Mary, Mother of God School, and, above all, my parents for helping me to finance this project. A number of individuals have also alleviated the financial burden by warmly extending hospitality on my research visits to Montreal, Milan, Rome, and Mecosta (MI): John and Cecilia Zucchi, Daniele Riggi, Francesca and Enrico Imbasciati, Caterina Tucci and family, Annette Kirk and The Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal.

Friends have sustained this work at various points with concrete gestures of interest and generosity. I wish to acknowledge Caterina Tucci, who raced from Foligno to Perugia to chase the train on which I had accidentally left my thesis, and for heroically recovering it (along with several valuable books of philosophy) from a rubbish bin where it had been deposited by a thief clearly uninterested in the reading (!); Chiara Berneri, Giacomo Mazzi, and Maria Ubiali, members of *Communion and Liberation*, whose friendship, hospitality, and virtuous example made the first two years of this project in Edinburgh memorable; Gordon Nixon, who shouldered my burden at *The Francis de Sales Centre* when I reached the final stages of writing; Luca Marcora who generously assisted with the archival research undertaken at *Communion and Liberation* headquarters in Milan; Giovanni Teruzzi and Lorenzo Teruzzi who guided me through the library of *l'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore*; Stephanie Knott, Chiara Berneri, and, above all, Steven Aldorasi, who assisted with proofreading; Frank Riggi and Stephen Di Pede who provided computing assistance; and my friend Joseph Stuart, a tenacious interlocutor and my most interested reader, whose strong faith and good example have been as a light guiding a ship through the night back to its port.

This thesis makes a critical argument for the importance of good teachers in the formation of younger generations of Catholics. The work undertaken in these pages owes a great debt of gratitude to a dozen or so Salesians of Don Bosco whose generosity and guidance formed my heart during the most crucial years of my life. I also wish to acknowledge Rebecca Pontisso, the foundress of Mary, Mother of God



School, for recognizing my God-given identity and believing in the importance of this project to the life and mission of *The Francis de Sales Centre*. I am grateful, above all, to my mentors, Nicholas Adams and Fergus Kerr, O.P., with whom I have not only deepened my knowledge of philosophy, but learned how charitably to bring a pupil from good to better. Finally, the fact that I have had so much over which to be thankful ultimately moves me to thank God, my greatest benefactor, from whom all blessings flow.

# Abbreviations

I generally follow M. Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione: Le origini (1954-1968)* (Milan: Edizioni San Paolo, 2001).

## WORKS BY LUIGI GIUSSANI

ACC	<i>L'autocoscienza del cosmo</i>
AD	<i>Affezione e Dimora</i>
AL	<i>Avvenimento di libertà. Conversazioni con giovani universitari</i>
AVE	<i>Un avvenimento di vita cioè una storia</i>
CGC	<i>Certi di alcune grandi cose (1979-1981)</i>
CVE	<i>Il cammino al vero è un'esperienza</i>
DTM	<i>Dal temperamento un metodo</i>
IRI	<i>L'io rinasce in un incontro (1986-1987)</i>
LAC	<i>L'avvenimento cristiano</i>
LFA	<i>Lettere di fede e di amicizia ad Angelo Majo</i>
MCL	<i>Il movimento di Comunione e Liberazione: Conversazioni con Robi Ronza</i>
ML	<i>Le mie letture</i>
OPC	<i>All'origine della pretesa cristiana</i>
PCP	<i>Perché la Chiesa. Tomo I. La pretesa permane</i>
PS	<i>Porta la speranza</i>
QO	<i>Qui è ora (1984-1985)</i>
RE	<i>Il rischio educativo</i>
RG	<i>Realtà e giovinezza. La sfida</i>
RSE	<i>GS: Riflessioni sopra un'esperienza</i>
SD	<i>Il senso di Dio e l'uomo moderno</i>
SPVC	<i>Si può vivere così?</i>
SPVV	<i>Si può (veramente?!) vivere così?</i>
SR	<i>Il senso religioso</i>
TA	<i>«Tu» (o dell'amicizia)</i>
TEC	<i>Tracce d'esperienza cristiana</i>
TT	<i>Il tempo e il tempio. Dio e l'uomo</i>
USD	<i>L'uomo e il suo destino.</i>

Works translated into English:

JTE	<i>The Journey to Truth is an Experience (CVE)</i>
OCC	<i>At the Origins of the Christian Claim (OPC)</i>
PLW	<i>Is it Possible to Live This Way? (SPVC)</i>
RS	<i>The Religious Sense (SR)</i>
WC	<i>Why the Church? (PCP)</i>

# Introduction

If I had stated these ideas to the leaders of the ‘realist’ school they would have said, as I have heard them say a hundred times, ‘you don’t mean that; what you mean is ...’ and then would have followed a caricature of my ideas in terms of ‘realist’ principles, with sandbags for arms and legs; all so beautifully done that I could hardly have restrained my impulse to cheer. — R. G. Collingwood (1938).<sup>1</sup>

It is always a significant question to ask about any philosopher: what is he afraid of? — Iris Murdoch (1950).<sup>2</sup>

Luigi Giussani (1922-2005) is today remembered as one of the most prominent figures of twentieth-century Catholicism. Over the course of five decades, he laboured tirelessly, both as a priest and educator, to revitalize the Church through new expressions of ecclesial life, not the least of which was his guidance of lay movements. His greatest legacy remains the founding of *Communion and Liberation* (CL), an international movement devoted to manifesting the relevance of religion to the questions that arise intrinsically within the human condition. It is in relation to CL, in particular, that the historical and philosophical significance of Giussani’s activity as an author comes to the fore.

The Church, through the early part of Giussani’s lifetime, was engaged in an intense philosophical campaign against modernity. The ever waning attendance in churches and the retreat of religion from the public sphere, despite the vigorous efforts of anti-Modernist popes, seemed continually to ask pastorally-minded theologians to devise more sympathetic responses to the new conditions obtaining for belief and practice. Many of the convictions and hopes to which Giussani held throughout this period, such as the possibility of a rapprochement between secular and sacred authors, and according to which he engaged the modernist challenge to religion and the Church, coincided eventually with the Church’s greater openness to dialogue with the modern world, as expressed, for instance, in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (1965). Working assiduously within the new climate of “aggiornamento,” heralded by the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965),

---

<sup>1</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *An Autobiography* (London: Oxford University Press, 1939. Reprinted with introduction and notes by Stephen Toulmin. Oxford: Clarendon, 1978, 2002), 73.

<sup>2</sup> Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics* (1950; New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999), 359.

Giussani's activities as a teacher and pastor either followed or complemented the work of the greatest figures leading the post-conciliar reform, such as Paul VI (1963-1978) and John Paul II (1978-2005).

Giussani's own unique contribution to the revitalization of the Church in modern times, which he recommended to younger generations of Catholics, involved the pioneering of a method, eventually embodied in the practices of CL, by means of which the ancient faith of the Church might fully regain its role and vitality in ordinary life. This endeavour, philosophical in scope, was accompanied by a vast output of speeches, conferences, sermons, articles, and books that drew out the universal implications of a natural aptitude for the proposition that God exists. These writings, largely pastoral and first disseminated in Milanese universities, document one of the largest and most influential attempts of the post-conciliar period to revitalize religion in the contemporary urban milieu of Northern Italy. In particular, they exhibit how the introduction of "new fonts" of theology – e.g., German-Romantic theology, *nouvelle théologie*, and "Louvain Thomism" – were used to gain particular advantage over modern concerns.

The ever increasing prominence of *Communion and Liberation*, even after Giussani's death in 2005, makes the content of his writings vitally important for those interested in gaining insight into the attractiveness of certain philosophical claims on contemporary Catholics in Modern Western society. Giussani's writings shed light on how the weight of these claims was acquired by different historical and contextual pressures exerted from within and outside the Church; and how his writings sit within the broader context of the Catholic intellectual tradition, including both that which they already assert that is established and that which they have yet to assert to ensure their continued longevity as practical counsels for daily Christian living.

This introduction is in two parts. First, I will give readers the historical background necessary for reading the material contained in subsequent chapters. Second, I present the themes from Giussani's work to be analysed, their significance to modern Church life, the problems and concerns they raise, which motivate my own analytical work, and the method I shall use to execute my analysis and suggest possible lines of repair.

## PART I: GIUSSANI AND COMMUNION AND LIBERATION

### Biographical Sketch

Luigi Giussani was born on October 15, 1922. His birthplace was the small Lombard town of Desio, in the Province of Monza, which was also the birthplace of the reigning pope of the time, Pius XI (1922-1939). Giussani's parents were of modest means. His father, Beniamino, an artisan by trade and a lover of *belcanto*, was notably a supporter of the *Partito Socialista Italiano* (PSI). His mother, Angelina Gelosa, originally a textile worker hired by Gavazzi S.p.A., was a devout Christian and a dedicated wife and mother. She left her job, after marrying, in order to raise Luigi and her four following children.

In 1933, at eleven years of age, Giussani entered the seminary of San Pietro Martire, which is located in the near-by town of Seveso. Four years later, he and his classmates were transferred to the newly built seminary in Venegono, an impressive neo-classical structure which opened its doors in 1930, only four years after it had been commissioned by Abbot Ildefonso Schuster O. S. B. (later appointed by Pope Pius XII [1939-1958] as Archbishop of Milan [1928-1954]). Throughout his life, Giussani recalled his years of seminary training frequently and with fondness. He referred to his former professors and spiritual mentors with a deep sense of gratitude, crediting them with his education not only in philosophy and theology, but attributing to them a generous exposure to culture: works of music, literature, and art.

On May 26, 1945, one month before the end of World War II, Giussani was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop Schuster. There were very few changes in Giussani's daily routine immediately after ordination. His professors had slated him to remain at Venegono for teaching and further studies. Apart from a brief interlude due to illness, Giussani spent the next nine years at Venegono, teaching dogmatic and Oriental theology and, on weekends and holy days, delivering conferences for *Azione Cattolica* in Milan. At the same time, he pursued research in American Protestant theology, successfully defending his doctoral thesis in 1954.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Giussani successfully defended his thesis in 1952: "Il senso cristiano dell'uomo secondo Reinhold Niebuhr." It was first published as *Reinhold Niebuhr* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1969), and later expanded and republished as *Teologia protestante Americana* (Venegono: La scuola cattolica, 1969). It was reprinted with introduction by Elisa Buzi as *Grandi linee della teologia protestante americana*

Giussani would recall 1954 for years to come with another event in mind. It was also the year he decided to leave academia to teach in high school. His decision was provoked by a conversation he held with some youngsters on a train to the Adriatic. Through it, he learned, frighteningly, how spiritually and intellectually bereft the youth of the period were. Giussani's Archbishop, Giovanni Battista Montini (1954-1963), later to become Paul VI (1963-1978), granted Giussani permission to leave Venegono that summer and reassigned him to the *lycée* Berchet, a classical academy in the centre of metropolitan Milan.

Meanwhile, Giussani's meetings with the students of *Azione Cattolica* (AC) and *Gioventù Studentesca* (GS) continued with even greater frequency than before. And his contact with the university campus was made even more regular in 1964, when he accepted a lectureship in theology at *l'Università Cattolica di Milano*, a post he held until 1990. In the same year, he founded the *Centro Culturale Charles Péguy* which enabled university alumni, who were otherwise taken up with their families and jobs, to continue meeting on a regular basis to reflect on life and faith.

Meanwhile, in 1965, some of Giussani's students joined hands with Marxist activists. Unnerved by Giussani's sudden – albeit unwitting – proximity to Marxism, Archbishop Giovanni Colombo (1963-1979)<sup>4</sup> offered him a five-month sabbatical for the purposes of study. Giussani was sent to the United States. The year was 1966. When Giussani returned to Milan toward the end of that year, he was asked to desist from his involvement with the movements.

Only in 1969, after the previous year's riots had swept through university campuses, did a group of students gather once again around Giussani. In order to rekindle the experience of GS, they invented an appealing title for a promotional pamphlet, viz., “Comunione e Liberazione,” by which they would try to attract and enlist new members. The formula Communion and Liberation, by which the group

---

(Milan: Jaca Book, 1989). A critical edition with three articles published by Giussani between 1967 and 1968, treating Niebuhr on history and Brightman on personalism, was released with the title *Teologia Protestante Americana. Profilo Storico*, edited by Elisa Buzi (Milan: Marietti, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Giovanni Colombo was Archbishop of Milan from 1963 to 1979. In 1965 he was elevated to the College of Cardinals by Paul VI. Prior to his appointment as Archbishop of Milan, Colombo served at Venegono Seminary, where he had been teaching since 1931. From 1939-1953 he was rector of Venegono, and in 1953, he was appointed Rector Major of the seminaries in Milan. At the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), he sat on the Conciliar preparatory commissions for seminaries and universities.

officially came to be known, conveyed the image of an embodied Christian presence in the universities that was both free and obedient to the Church. Through the next three decades, the dilation of CL into a highly influential and international ecclesiastical movement took up much of Giussani's life and work. While he would never return to academia as a professional theologian, he read and wrote prolifically for the university students and faculty in CL. He also guided the foundation of a number of other movements and communities that sprang from the diverse interests and initiatives of CL, vastly extending the reach of his ideas. Within the Church, Giussani is recognized as the founder of *Memores Domini* – an association of vowed lay persons, and is credited with fostering numerous vocations to the *Suore di Carità dell'Assunzione* and to the Cistercian abbey of Vitorchiano. Beyond the strictly ecclesiastical setting, other fruits of CL include the foundation of the *Compagnia delle Opere* (CDO) – an association of business men and entrepreneurs; the *Fondazione per la Sussidiarietà* – for the promotion of cultural renewal through formation; and the *Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale* (AVSI) – a non-governmental organization established to promote education in the third world.

In 1983, Giussani was named a *monsignor* by John Paul II (1978-2005) with the title of *Honorary Prelate to the Pope*. Giussani died in 2005 after a lifetime of service to the Church. His funeral homily was delivered by Josef Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI (2005-present), who took the place of the then ailing pope.<sup>5</sup> The funeral was held in the Duomo of Milan before a gathering of several thousand mourners, including high ranking churchmen and state dignitaries. Giussani had spent his final years reflecting on the theme of mercy. The following remark is among the last of his formal statements to CL: “The most beautiful thing we can say is that we have to be merciful; to have mercy toward one another. [...] Faced with all the sins of the world, the obvious thing to say would be ‘God, destroy a world such as this!’ But God dies for a world such as this; he becomes a man and dies for men, and indeed his mercy represents the ultimate sense of the Mystery.”<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “Funeral Homily for Msgr. Giussani,” in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 31.4 (2004): 685–687.

<sup>6</sup> Giussani, *Appartenenza*, notes from Giussani's intervention at the “Beginning Day” for the adult members of CL in the Archdiocese of Milan, September 23, 2000, published in *Tracce – Litterae Communionis* 9 (2000), 4; quoted in Massimo Camisasca, *Don Giussani: la sua esperienza dell'uomo di Dio* (Milan [Cinisello-Balsamo]: Edizioni San Paolo, 2009), 160.

One of the main tasks of this thesis is to understand Giussani's writings in the light of the original question to which he sought to give a sufficient answer – sufficient, that is, to withstand rigorous testing. The philosophically-trained reader, familiar with the way theological propositions are formed, will be struck by Giussani's unusual use of language (e.g., the use of words such as event, encounter, presence, and gaze), the variety of non-theological and even secular sources on which he draws for inspiration, together with his preference for using punchy quotations rather than working through arguments. None of these idiosyncrasies can be adequately explained apart from Giussani's original question (or set of questions), its origins in history and context, and the influence exerted on him by his audience's expectations. Accessing and reconstructing that question means having to understand what Giussani feared.<sup>7</sup> There is no person more suited to giving us that understanding than Giussani himself. I have, therefore, provided, in the Appendix of this thesis, the translation of an interview Giussani held for the famous Italian journalist Robi Ronza in 1975.<sup>8</sup> In this interview, Giussani rehearses crucial political, cultural, and intellectual turning-points in Italy through the 1950s and 60s, furnishing today's readers of his texts with an interpretive key. Giussani, however, paints his descriptions in broad strokes. For this reason, I provide the following section to amplify the initial picture provided in that interview. It will expand on areas of intellectual biography, and only those that touch on the philosophical themes explored in this thesis. I have organized the information under these categories: Cultural Milieu, Seminary Training, Modernism, and Student Movements.

### ***Seminary training***

#### *a. Theology at Venegono*

Giussani's categories and analytical language derive from a variety of authors, secular and Christian, ancient and modern, but the basic premise of his

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. "It is always a significant question to ask about any philosopher: what is he afraid of?" (Iris Murdoch, *Existentialists and Mystics* [1950; New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999])e.

<sup>8</sup> Robi Ronza (1941-present) is a freelance journalist and writer, renowned in Lombardy for his expertise in political science, international affairs, and institutional problems. He was an official consultant to the Regional Government of Lombardy under President Roberto Formigoni (1995-present). He joined Giussani in 1980 to found the *Meeting of Friendship Among Peoples* in Rimini, an annual gathering of over 800,000 participants that unites diverse faiths and cultures together, fostering friendship on the basis of peace, cohabitation, and the common good.



writing, viz., to render the Christian fact significant in ordinary life, comes from sensitivities that were cultivated by his professors at Venegono Seminary from 1937-1945. The blend of theological opinion expressed at Venegono drew from the style of thought of a new generation of professors appointed by Alfredo Ildefonso Schuster (1880-1954) between 1931-1938, following the promulgation of Pius XI's *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*.<sup>9</sup> The more influential faculty, such as Carlo Figini (1883-1967) and Gaetano Corti (1910-1989), had received advanced degrees in theology from the Jesuits at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome in the interwar period. The same period at Venegono was influenced by the threat of fascism. Various publications issuing from Venegono addressed Italian political and social reform from the point of view of Christian inspiration over and against political ideology.<sup>10</sup>

The intellectual milieu of Venegono was, by all accounts, exceptional for its openness to new currents of theology in lieu of the anti-modernist climate still prevalent in the Church and through much of which it seems to have operated without significant interruption. Perhaps for this reason, the school of Venegono is described as an intellectual movement by Francesco Bertoldi, one of its foremost historians.<sup>11</sup> At least four fonts of theology, all manifest in Giussani's writing, constituted the theological milieu at Venegono. According to Bertoldi, these were: the theology of John Henry Newman (1801-1890), the Tübingen school of Catholic theology, the school of Le Saulchoir, and the so-called *nouvelle théologie*.<sup>12</sup> Newman's works were not typically read in Italian seminaries of that period. Ideas such as "personal conscience"<sup>13</sup> and "development"<sup>14</sup> were deemed threatening to the infallibility of the pope and the permanence of doctrine. The school at Tübingen,

<sup>9</sup> Pius XI, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, Apostolic Constitution on universities and faculties of ecclesiastical schools (Vatican City, 1931). Numerous editions.

<sup>10</sup> See *Il Seminario di Venegono 1935-1985*, 211-235.

<sup>11</sup> "La «Scuola di Venegono» (1935-1955)," in *Annuario Teologico* (Milan: ISTR, 1985). See also C. Pasini and M. Spezzibottiani, *Il Seminario di Venegono 1935-1985* (Milan: Nuove Edizione Duomo, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> For the influence of *la nouvelle théologie*, the Tübingen School, and the school of Le Saulchoir on Giussani's seminary, particularly the appropriation of certain categories and methods by his professors (e.g., the influence of Marie-Dominique Chenu on Carlo Colombo), see "La «Scuola di Venegono» (1935-1955)."

<sup>13</sup> See John Henry Newman, *Conscience and papacy: letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, edited with an introduction and notes by Stanley L. Jaki (Pinckney, Mich.: Real View Books, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> See John Henry Newman, *An essay on the development of Christian doctrine*, edited with an introduction by J. M. Cameron (1845; Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1974).

similarly, incited distinct misgivings within the Roman curia. Publications from its faculty incurred severe criticism from Rome for casting doubt over the institution of sacramental confession, the use of Latin in the liturgy, and the historical grounds of papal infallibility.<sup>15</sup> The writings of several professors were delated to ecclesiastical censors and some were placed on the *Index*.<sup>16</sup> One of Giussani's favourites among the Tübingen authors, Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), had been accused of heterodoxy by the cardinal archbishop of Cologne, Count Ferdinand August von Spiegel (1824-1835), causing him to be vetoed from a professorship in Bonn.<sup>17</sup> The school of *Le Saulchoir* had its own fair share of controversial theologians. To cite one example, Marie-Dominique Chenu O.P. (1895-1990), a certain influence on Giussani's teacher Carlo Colombo,<sup>18</sup> had published a manifesto in 1937, *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir*, which in 1942 was placed on the *Index*. At the same time Chenu was denounced on behalf of the Master of the Order explicitly as a "modernist."<sup>19</sup>

By the 1950s the so-called *nouvelle théologie*, including the theology pioneered at the *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven*, extolled by Venegono's Carlo Colombo in an article published in 1952,<sup>20</sup> was subject to the caution extended by *Humani Generis* to new methods in theology.<sup>21</sup> Theologians drawing on German Romantic theology and the fonts of *nouvelle théologie* in the 1940s and 1950s, i.e.,

---

<sup>15</sup> See James Tunstead Burtchaell, *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, vol. 2, edited by Ninian Smart, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 113.

<sup>16</sup> E.g., Johann Baptist von Hirscher (1788-1865) wrote *De genuina missæ notione* (1821), which decentralized the notion of sacrifice in the Mass. The book was promptly placed on the *Index*. He was criticised for never retracting the book. When in 1843 he stood for appointment as coadjutor bishop of Freiburg, Friedrich Emmanuel von Hurter (1787-1865), his friend, raised the cry of alarm. See Georges Goyau, "Johann Baptist von Hirscher," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07363b.htm>, accessed August 6, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> Burtchaell, *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, vol. 2, 113.

<sup>18</sup> Francesco Bertoldi, "L'atto di fede e il metodo teologico in Carlo Colombo," in *Il Seminario di Venegono 1935-1985*, 30-33.

<sup>19</sup> For a brief account of the controversy surrounding Chenu's theology, see Fergus Kerr's *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 18-21. For a more ample treatment, favorable to Chenu, see Christophe Potworowski, *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001).

<sup>20</sup> Carlo Colombo, "La metodologia teologica dal 1900-1950," in *La Scuola Cattolica* (1952): 453-479.

<sup>21</sup> "Unfortunately these advocates of novelty easily pass from despising scholastic theology to the neglect of and even contempt for the Teaching Authority of the Church itself, which gives such authoritative approval to scholastic theology." (Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, Encyclical concerning some false opinions threatening to undermine Catholic doctrine [Vatican City, 1950], § 18. Numerous editions).

before the Second Vatican Council and the promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes* (1965),<sup>22</sup> could not afford to be unmindful of the preceding half-century of ecclesiastical campaigning against modernism.<sup>23</sup> It is worth recalling, for example, that only a few years prior to Giussani's seminary training at Venegono, the faculty of the major seminary of Milan (via Corso Venezia), where his professors received their training, had been investigated for suspicions of modernism at the behest of Benedict XV (1914-1922).<sup>24</sup>

As we shall see, Giussani borrows a good deal of vocabulary, including the categories of event, experience, and encounter (*avvenimento*, *esperienza*, and *incontro*) from the so-called "new theology."<sup>25</sup> The first of Giussani's texts to employ such categories was *Gioventù Studentesca: riflessioni sopra un'esperienza* (Milan: Mediolani, 1959), published with the *imprimatur* of Carlo Figini (1883-

---

<sup>22</sup> By 1965, the authors of the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* wanted to address the "deep-seated changes affecting modern life and belief." The flowing areas were flagged for consideration: (a) changes in what we know about the world, (b) changes in the shaping of society, (c) changes in attitudes, morals, and religion. The following elements give shape to (a): mathematical and natural sciences (not excluding the sciences dealing with man himself). The following elements give shape to (b): industrialization, urbanization, emigration. The following elements give shape to (c): dissonance between tradition and today, decline of popular piety, a more critical appropriation of religion. See *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world (Vatican City, 1965), § 44. Numerous editions. For a commentary on *Gaudium et Spes* see Marie-Dominique Chenu "Une constitution pastorale de l'Église," in *Documentation hollandaise du Concile*, no. 205 (1965). For a more recent commentary with extensive bibliography see Philippe Bordeyne, *L'homme et son angoisse: La théologie morale de «Gaudium et Spes»* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2004); in English see Tracy Rowland, *Culture and the Thomist Tradition after Vatican II* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2003), 11-32.

<sup>23</sup> Let this one quotation stand for many: "[...] the partisans of error are to be sought not only among the Church's open enemies; they lie hid, a thing to be deeply deplored and feared, in her very bosom and heart, and are the more mischievous, the less conspicuously they appear." (Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Encyclical on the doctrines of the modernists [Vatican City, 1907], § 2. Numerous editions. For relevant comments, see Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 1-16; Paul Misner, "Catholic anti-Modernism: the ecclesial setting," in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context*, edited by Darrell Jodock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 56-87; and *Nineteenth Century Religious Thought in the West*, vol. 2, chapter 5.

<sup>24</sup> For this episode see Massimo Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione: Le origini (1954-1968)* (Milan, San Paolo, 2001), 59, footnote 3. Cf. A. Rimoldi, "La visita apostolica dell'abate Ildefonso Schuster ai Seminari milanesi (1926-1928)," in *Il cardinale Alfredo Ildefonso Schuster. Avvio allo studio. Archivio Ambrosiano* 38 (1979), 145-176.

<sup>25</sup> In an interview in 1979 with Giorgio Sacro for *Il Sabato* Giussani named three significant "intellectual encounters," all from *nouvelle théologie*: (1) John Henry Newman, (2) Johann Adam Möhler and nineteenth century German Romantic theology, and (3) the theologians and writers of the Russian Orthodox tradition, namely Dostoevsky and Chomjakov. Giorgio Sacro, "Da quale vita nasce Comunione e Liberazione," interview in *Il Sabato*, May 1979. Reprinted in *Un avvenimento di vita, cioè una storia: Itinerario di quindici anni concepiti e vissuti*, ed. Carmine Di Martino (Milan: Il Sabato, 1993), 361.

1964), notorious in the Archdiocese of Milan, it was said, for his strict ecclesiastical censorship. One of Figini's biographers, seemingly naive of the philosophical implications of his observation, mentions how he openly displayed in his personal library the works of Alessandro Manzoni (1785-1873), Newman, and *mirabile dictu*, Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855).<sup>26</sup> The openness of Figini (himself a former professor of Venegono) to theologies pushing the bounds of Thomism, however carefully, is actually a remarkable fact, largely unexplored in his biography and other relevant commentaries. Figini's bibliography, I have tried to demonstrate, is not the only one to stand out among Giussani's early mentors.

*b. Philosophy at Venegono*

A second factor which shaped Venegono's curriculum, according to Bertoldi, was the reaction on the part of Giussani's seminary professors to "*la cultura scholastica-metafisica*."<sup>27</sup> The phrase "*scholastica-metafisica*" invites pause for reflection. Scholasticism refers to the philosophy of the high middle ages: not only the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), but also that of Bonaventure (1221-1274), Duns Scotus (1265-1308), and William of Ockham (c. 1288 – c. 1348), for instance. The term Neo-Scholasticism, pioneered by Jesuits Joseph Kleugten (1811-1883) and Matteo Liberatore (1810-1892), refers to the revival of medieval methods of philosophy in the training of the clergy and in the response of the Church to the problems posed to the Catholic faith by the Enlightenment. But the "*cultura scholastica-metafisica*," read in the light of Giussani's disassociation from Neo-Thomism above, while complicating matters on one level, likely refers to the Thomism pioneered by the likes of Dominican Thomist Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange

---

<sup>26</sup> Rosmini's views were considered controversial in the least. During his own lifetime two of his works, *The Five Wounds of Holy Church* and the *Civil Constitution according to Social Justice* were placed in the *Index of Prohibited Books*. He was condemned again posthumously (1888-9) when forty propositions, taken mostly from books published after his death, were included in the decree *Post Obitum* of Leo XIII. Figini, who died in 1967, anticipated the turn in ecclesiastical opinion by three decades; for it was only in 2001 that the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith declared "The motives for preoccupation and for doctrinal and prudential difficulties which determined the promulgation of the decree *Post Obitum* condemning the 'Forty Propositions' drawn from the works of Antonio Rosmini can now be considered as surmounted." (CDF, *Osservatore Romano*, 1 July 2001). For Figini's biography, see "Mons. Carlo Figini: un maestro che seppe ascoltare (Dai ricordi di un alunno)" from *Miscellanea Carlo Figini* in *La Scuola Cattolica* (Varese: Venegono Inferiore, 1964).

<sup>27</sup> Bertoldi, "L'atto di fede e il metodo teologico in Carlo Colombo," in *Annuario*, 21.

(1877-1964): viz., “the exposition of the principles of ontology [...] all too much like the exposition, highly abstract and syllogistic, of a set of quasi-Euclidean theorems.”<sup>28</sup> Neo-Scholasticism and Neo-Thomism, then, fall within the complex and diversified revival of Thomas Aquinas’s thought initiated under Leo XIII (1878-1903).<sup>29</sup> The exclusion of Garrigou-Lagrance, a conservative Thomist, dubbed the “sacred monster of Thomism” by one of his biographers,<sup>30</sup> from the bibliographies of Venegono’s faculty, is in line with a number of theologians of the time (Marie-Domenique Chenu [1895-1990], Henri de Lubac [1896-1991], Hans Urs von Balthasar[1905-1988]), who revered Thomas, but believed that conservative Thomism was beyond the reach of a new generation of Catholics.<sup>31</sup>

Garrigou-Lagrance, a pupil of Ambroise Gardeil (1859-1931), continued the work of his mentor, responding to a variety of problems: “immanence, voluntarism, relativization of the concept in favor of an immediate intuition of being, together with a metaphysics of life and mobility rather than a stable metaphysics of being.”<sup>32</sup> Each of these areas represented not only a departure from Thomism, but a concession to Cartesian-Kantian philosophy, and a decisive step in the direction of modernism. They had been introduced to Catholic theology by Maurice Blondel and Henri Bergson, and made more acute by wide-spread interest in William James’s pragmatism and an inaccurate interpretation of Newman’s theology of faith.<sup>33</sup> Giussani, it is worth noting, borrows variously from each of these authors. Given the strong reaction against them in Rome, particularly on the part of Garrigou-Lagrance, it is quite remarkable that they should have found their way into Giussani’s repertory.

---

<sup>28</sup> Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 12.

<sup>29</sup> See Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, Encyclical on the restoration of Christian philosophy (Vatican City, 1879). Numerous editions. For a commentary on Neo-Scholasticism and Neo-Thomism see Gerald McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press & Association of Jesuit University Presses, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> See Richard Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Garrigou-Lagrance* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2005).

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Garrigou-Lagrance, *La synthèse thomiste* (Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1946).

<sup>32</sup> McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, 56.

<sup>33</sup> McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, 56.

At Venegono, already in 1934, Carlo Colombo, published a favorable, albeit cautious, review of Blondel's *L'Action* (1893).<sup>34</sup> One possible source of Venegono's "openness" to Blondel may derive from the Institute of Higher Philosophy in Leuven.<sup>35</sup> The importance of Leuven as a source of philosophy for the faculty of Venegono is highlighted in an article Colombo published in 1946. He examined how certain Belgian-trained theologians, such as Roger Aubert (1914-2009), treated the problem of the act of faith ("*il problema della fede*") in light of "the great merit of Blondel, notwithstanding the exaggerations and inexactitudes in which his ideas occasionally fell" (*il grande merito di Blondel, nonostante le esagerazioni e le inesattezze nelle quali sono talvolta caduti*).<sup>36</sup> Leuven Thomism, perfectly in line with Giussani's project, strove to practice a philosophical method that took seriously the epistemological question of the act of faith and tried to solve it from within an existentialist framework which was sympathetic to the human person: "Taught and written in the vernacular [instead of Latin] by professors who had been students at other European universities, it was much less clerical in tone and less oriented toward theology than the philosophy of nineteenth-century scholastics."<sup>37</sup>

That Venegono from the 1930s through the 1950s had been allowed to draw from other, ostensibly modernist fonts of theology, without undergoing significant interruption from the Vatican, is the achievement of a cautious theological engagement with modernity, but one still benevolent to modern authors. The need explicitly to reassure certain onlookers that philosophy at Venegono, despite its open engagement with modernity, still referred to the perennial philosophy of Thomas Aquinas was clearly designed to anticipate censorious interventions from Rome.<sup>38</sup> Colombo, in his published commentary on *Humani Generis* (1950), stated that, as far as he was concerned, the term "nouveaux," concerning which the Vatican had

---

<sup>34</sup> Carlo Colombo, "La filosofia religiosa di Maurizio Blondel," in *La Scuola Cattolica* 62.4 (August 1934): 401-411. Cf. Maurice Blondel, *Action* (1893), *Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, translated by Olivia Blanchette (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

<sup>35</sup> Founded in 1889 by Cardinal Désiré Mercier (1851-1926) to renew philosophical reflection in response to positivism through the scholastic tradition exemplified by Thomas Aquinas.

<sup>36</sup> Colombo, "Il problema della fede," in *La Scuola Cattolica* 74 (1946): 292-313; here 299.

<sup>37</sup> McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, 38.

<sup>38</sup> Carlo Colombo, "La scuola di Venegono (1935-1955)," 30: "Il cattolicesimo è la filosofia di S. Tommaso." See the discussion from pp. 10-37.

expressed grave reservation, was to be applied only to the dialogue of theology with the modern world, and not to the content of revelation and the deposit of faith.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Ecclesiastical Movements***

#### *a. Lay Movements in General*

While the *raison d'être* of lay movements in the twentieth century was, in the strictest sense, directed to the “formation of consciences” (e.g., through schooling in the catechism and works of charity), their purpose extended to grounding political, economic, and social activity in Christian values. In virtue of this political outlook, the lay movements distinguished themselves from the confraternities, pious associations, and Third Orders which stood alongside them and often had more ancient roots. An understanding of what that political outlook entailed in more precise terms, particularly as Giussani experienced it, goes back to the Church’s struggle for sovereignty in the Kingdom of Italy after the *Risorgimento*. The dissolution of the Papal States in the 1920s was met with grave concern in the Church over the autonomy of religious institutions, such as schools, hospitals, and orphanages. The Lateran Pacts (1929), drafted to work out a peaceable agreement between the Kingdom of Italy and the Holy See after decades of conflict and concessions after the *Risorgimento*, actually did little to halt Fascist encroachments, which continued until the ousting of the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* in 1943. The political struggle with which Giussani identified in this context touched crucially on the Church’s solicitude for religious orders and dioceses involved in education.

The lay movements in the twentieth century, such as *Azione Cattolica*, had had an active and often incisive role in asserting Christian values in institutions where the anti-clerical regime made it difficult to do so. Yet, more than once, the official position of the Church and of the movements themselves regarding the role they were to play in society changed. In 1952, for instance, *Azione Cattolica*

---

<sup>39</sup> See Carlo Colombo, “Il significato teologico dell’enciclica «*Humani Generis*»,” in *La Scuola Cattolica* 78 (1950), 379-428; reprinted *Scritti teologici* (Varese: 1966), 175-206: “There is a common effort – the encyclical maintains – at the foundation of diverse attempts to renew theology [...]: the preoccupation to adhere to the characteristic mentality of modern culture. Of course, not to its errors, but to the values which were not developed in the culture of the Christian Middle Ages: the concept of science, a sense of history, a perception for individual interiority and originality [...]. All of these values are not at all incompatible with Christianity: instead, they are the life through which Christianity can be understood and appropriated by modern man.”

described itself unequivocally as a non-political movement.<sup>40</sup> But in the era between the wars, the case had been different. In that era, before Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) got around to disbanding the lay movements, such as *Azione Cattolica* and the Sunday oratories, having accused them of conspiracy, they had been instrumental in galvanizing support among the agrarian class for the *Partito Popolare*: a political party that took inspiration from the social doctrine of the Church, namely that expounded in *Rerum Novarum* by Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903). Indeed, had it not been for the dangers posed by fascism to numerous religious and clergy, the protests of GIAC (*Gioventù Italiana di Azione Cattolica*) might not so easily have been curtailed by Pope Pius XI (1922-1939) and relegated to the private sphere.<sup>41</sup> Generally, they regarded themselves as much more than a passing fad and measured success in terms of their incisiveness on society.

In the immediate post-war period (1945-1948), the Church regained its influence in Italian politics. Luigi Gedda (1902-2000), the director of *Azione Cattolica*, organized *comitati civici*, with the full support of Pius XII behind him, to help bring *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) to victory in the 1948 elections against the “sovietici” (*Partito Comunista Italiano* and *Partito Socialista Italiano*). However conducive the ecclesiastical movements were to DC’s victory, the line between religious activity and political action was consequentially blurred once again. Throughout the 1950s, for the majority of protagonists within the ecclesiastical movements, the vague rhetoric of “forming good Christians” and “responsible citizens” was politically charged and open to various interpretations. By the 1960s, the student movements, primed by post-war existentialism and New Left variations on “Marxism with a human face,”<sup>42</sup> co-opted these phrases, reconfigured their meanings, and pressed them into new, revolutionary forms of service. The results, according to Giussani’s archbishop, Giovanni Colombo (1963-1979), were amply on

---

<sup>40</sup> See Luigi Civardi, *Manuale di Azione Cattolica*, 12<sup>th</sup> Italian ed. (Pavia: Tipo-Libreria Vescovile, 1952), 22, 55. The historical study most relevant to my purposes here is Guido Formigoni and Giorgio Vecchio, *L’Azione Cattolica nella Milano del Novecento* (Milan: Rusconi Libri S.p.A., 1989).

<sup>41</sup> The decree dissolving catholic movements in Italy, accusing them of conspiracy, was issued by the fascist regime on May 29, 1931. Pope Pius XI responded by issuing the encyclical *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* (Vatican: June 29, 1931). Speaking in defense of the movements, he defined them strictly as pious associations of the faithful whose purpose was to gather for prayer and charitable works.

<sup>42</sup> David McLellan, “Marxism,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, edited by Ted Honderich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 561.



display in the riots that besieged university campuses in 1968: “a clear compromise of Gospel values.”<sup>43</sup>

*b. Student Movements*

From 1951 to 1954 Giussani made weekly visits to Milan where he presided at the meetings of *Azione Cattolica* (AC), while spending the rest of the week composing his doctoral thesis at Venegono.<sup>44</sup> In October 1954, after submitting his thesis, his commitment to the Milanese university students deepened as he became increasingly involved with *Gioventù Studentesca* (GS): an organization designed to gather the adult members of AC from diverse locations on a regular basis in order to organize apostolic outreach to high school and university students. Giussani was immediately struck by the methods of AC, which he deemed inept and ineffectual: “[...] the method of doing apostolate was personal and individual, the result of which was to tie success entirely to the abilities and educational background of the individual. The call to return [to the Church] was moralistic and sentimental.”<sup>45</sup> Thus, Giussani’s first instinct was to address what he deemed to be a methodological deficiency. An approach was needed, he said, that neither framed Christianity merely as a philosophy of life, nor split what was natural from the supernatural, e.g., in the manner of Jacques Maritain’s dualism (1882-1973).<sup>46</sup> “As soon as I realized that the majority of persons (including those who still attended church) were psychologically or culturally removed from Christianity, I maintained that the proclamation had to spread from everything that seemed contingent and secondary in order that it might emerge instead from its essentiality.” What Giussani catalogued under “contingent” and “secondary forms of life” included judgement, freedom, and beauty. Starting from these themes, says Massimo Camisasca, Giussani anticipated the rapport between life and faith that was accentuated at the Second Vatican

---

<sup>43</sup> See Archbishop’s condemnation of the riots at the Università Cattolica di Milano: “A proposito dei disordini all’Università Cattolica,” in *Rivista Diocesana Milanese* 57.4 (April 1968), 256-257.

<sup>44</sup> See above, footnote 1.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Massimo Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione: Le Origini (1954-1968)*, vol. 1 (Cinisello Balsamo [Milan]: Edizione San Paolo, 2001), 96.

<sup>46</sup> Giussani observes: “In our opinion [i.e., of CL], too many Christian stances today are dualistic, resulting from a particular interpretation of Maritain’s thought, among other things. Indeed, we could say that dualism was unfortunately the guiding principle of the better part of almost all of the [Christian] formation advanced by men of the Church in these last ten years [i.e., since 1976]” (*MCL*, 112).

Council, closing the gap between Church and modern man, clergy and laity, nature and grace, natural and supernatural, etc.<sup>47</sup>

The ethos behind GS and CL and the writings Giussani composed for their guidance was, therefore, rooted in life. As had been the style at Venegono, “only after pursuing [a direct engagement with secularism and atheism], and in a very limited way, would we seek to show the *positive importance* of dogma.”<sup>48</sup> Thus, Giussani built up the movements in the light of history and current experience, assiduously avoiding any *a priori* schematization that might give way to a purportedly sentimental and moralistic grounding in faith. “To do theology and to be engaged in the immediate activities of an apostolate do not seem, in my opinion, to be activities either separate or incommensurable in themselves. I should say I am incapable of understanding how it is possible to do theology if not as a systematic and critical self-reflection on an experience of faith in action and, it follows, as an engagement with the mystery of Christ and of the Church, thus, of a passion for the salvation of the world.”<sup>49</sup> Even before the promulgation of *Gaudium et Spes* (1965), the movements exhibited a direct engagement with “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age.”<sup>50</sup>

Giussani taught his students a method of responding to life’s challenges which entailed making a fundamental wager on the Gospel. By association, the student movements were meant to be, on Giussani’s insistence, an environment in which the enquiring subject could experiment with a set of testable claims derived from the Christian tradition. The content of the faith was also taught, to be sure, but ultimately, the meetings of GS and CL were designed to lead to judgements on the “Christian hypothesis” in response to the real questions and problems of life. There inhered in this method a built-in flexibility conducive to repairing the moralism of manualist theology prevalent in the first-half of the century. In this way, the *raison d’être* of GS and CL compared with the heuristic approaches of other contemporary movements in Western Europe at the time, especially Christian Democracy and Catholic Action. As Michael Fogarty put it in his seminal study of Christian

<sup>47</sup> Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione*, vol. 1, 107.

<sup>48</sup> Francesco Bertoldi, “La «Scuola di Venegono» (1935-1955),” in *Annuario*, 28.

<sup>49</sup> Giussani, *Il movimento di Comunione e Liberazione. Conversazioni con Robi Ronza*, 187.

<sup>50</sup> *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Vatican City: 1965), § 1. Numerous editions.

Democracy, the movements provided their participants with “an extra assurance, a certainty of touch, and a capacity for recognizing and recovering from their mistakes which enable[d] them to grasp and solve the problems of life more completely and competently than if they had relied on human reason alone.”<sup>51</sup>

Over the course of several encounters with GS in the 1950s and 60s, Giussani’s work with university students brought him into direct confrontation with Marxism. His rebuttals directly engaged Antonio Gramsci and Ernst Bloch, targeting the young proponents of the *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI), above all. At GS meetings, he levied strong critiques against social engineering, bourgeois self-confidence, and scientific rationalism, emphasizing the failure of progress to deliver on its promises.<sup>52</sup> Giussani was unable, at any rate, to save all of the first youngsters under his guidance from developing an association with Marxism.<sup>53</sup> In 1966, on account of this inauspicious connection, Giussani gave up his guidance of GS to devote himself to theological studies at the request of his Archbishop, Giovanni Colombo.<sup>54</sup> As already mentioned, he was sent to the United States for a brief period.<sup>55</sup> He returned to the universities, only after the turbulence of 1968, with the proposal of starting a new movement: “Communion and Liberation.” The new name, originally only the formulaic title of a promotional pamphlet, became a leitmotif of the movement. Its significance underscored that true freedom could not be separated from communion. In subsequent years, the philosophical implications

---

<sup>51</sup> Michael P. Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe: 1820-1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), 1920.

<sup>52</sup> See especially Luigi Giussani, “Risposte Cristiane ai problemi dei giovani,” in *Quaderni dell’azione sociale* 1.2 (1961), second edition in *Quaderni di CI*, 16; third edition in *RG*, 125-147. See also “Crisi e possibilità della Gioventù Studentesca,” lecture from *XI Settimana di spiritualità* on “«La gioventù attuale e i problemi della spiritualità» at l’Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, Milano.” First edition: *Vita e Pensiero*, Milan, 1961; second edition: *RG* 148-157. Cf. Jacques Maritain, *Integral Humanism*, 211 (against bourgeois-self confidence), 202-204 (against Marxism and Soviet Communism).

<sup>53</sup> For a full account see Camisasca, “La crisi,” in *Comunione e Liberazione*, vol. 1, 279-288.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Giovanni Colombo, “A proposito dei disordini dell’Università Cattolica,” in *Rivista Diocesana Milanese* 57.4 (April 1968), 256-257. Cf. G. Colombo, “Lettera al sig. Nello Casalini studente dell’Università Cattolica,” in *Rivista Diocesana Milanese* 57.7 (July 1968), in which the Archbishop responds to the request of a student for clarification of his letter of March 23, 1968 stating: “change cannot and should never be achieved using methods of violence which are outside the law and which go against the legitimate authority or against the freedom and rights of others.”

<sup>55</sup> Giussani continued to pursue the research that he had initiated through his doctoral studies, reading American Protestant theologians, e.g., Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), Paul Tillich (1886-1965), concentrating especially on themes in political theology such as the Social Gospel.

of this new name would lead Giussani to reflect on the relationship between doctrine and the public sphere, including the role and importance of obedience in relation to autonomy.

In Giussani's own time, just as he was becoming involved with the youth movements, the encyclical *Humani Generis* (1950) was promulgated, cautioning against "new" fonts of theology, which, according to its author, were most common "especially among those teaching youth."<sup>56</sup> In the light of *Humani Generis*, it is hard to imagine that Giussani – a prominent exponent of Milanese church life – would not have exercised due caution in the style of theology he expounded within the universities and student movements. His invocation of German-Romantic language and categories, not to mention the rapprochement to *nouvelle théologie*, was effected tentatively and over time. Some of his vagueness is likely the consequence of attempting to induct untested methods of theology into the older systems upheld by the ecclesiastical hierarchy. The status of the self in philosophical discourse, and the relationship between authority and freedom, the contrast between experiential-expressivist and cultural-linguistic modes of evangelization, were all areas of institutional sensitivity which had to be navigated carefully. Some of Giussani's vagueness is likely attributable to his falling on the more contentious side of these debates in the years leading up to the Second Vatican Council. In the last twenty or so years of his life, however, Giussani produced clearer and better documented writing. Also, as suspicions of modernism waned following Vatican II, and mentalities shifted with greater ease to the theologies previously deemed controversial, Giussani found himself in the "conservative camp" of theologians (i.e., those writing for *Communio*, such as Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, and Joseph Ratzinger), and less associated, therefore, with the "progressivist camp" (i.e., those writing for *Concilium*, such as Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx, and Hans Küng).

## **PART II: PROBLEMATIC AND METHODOLOGY**

This thesis aims to produce a philosophical monograph on Monsignor Luigi Giussani (1922-2005): priest, university lecturer, high school teacher, public

---

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, Encyclical (numerous editions; Vatican City, 1950), § 13.

intellectual, and founder of the influential Catholic lay movement *Communion and Liberation* (CL). It is among the first critical studies of Giussani's works to appear,<sup>57</sup> and only the second world-wide from the philosophical perspective.<sup>58</sup> Different from the prevailing approaches, which attempt either to capture the author's philosophical vision or to derive a system of thought from his vast and eclectic bibliography, I look at Giussani as a teacher in dialogue with modernity. I have chosen to limit my attention to three prominent themes – Judgement, Freedom, and Beauty – and to study each one from a different text. In my opinion, these are the most foundational themes in his bibliography and integral to how he understands the religious education of young people. Mine is not an attempt to rehearse Giussani's philosophy of education, but to analyse the vagueness and ambiguity of his texts, which result as problematic for his readers. I attempt to make a contribution in the area of philosophical theology within the ambit of the Catholic moral tradition, and not *per se* to the philosophy of education. Be that as it may, the reader interested in pedagogy may find some of my conclusions relevant to contemporary questions in education.

Giussani's writings deserve to be taken seriously if for no other reason than that they were written to address the real concerns of an actual audience. What I mean by "real concerns" is that the questions put to Giussani, and which he sometimes put to himself, were not paper-generated doubts, but the actual problems of an actual community of enquirers. Most of the time, the enquirers were high school and university students; sometimes, often less apparent to his readers, Giussani wrote with the concerns of fellow pastors and bishops in mind. In all cases, Giussani never wrote only to be read; he wanted his ideas to be studied, discussed,

---

<sup>57</sup> I mention the following studies, based on influence, in descending order: *A Generative Thought: An Introduction to the Works of Luigi Giussani*, edited by Elisa Buzzi (Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); Angelo Scola, *Un pensiero sorgivo: sugli scritti di Luigi Giussani* (Genova, Milan: Casa Editrice Marietti S.p.A., 2004). For a biographical overview and comprehensive history of the founding of CL, see the monumental work of Massimo Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione*, 3 volumes (Cinisello Balsamo [Milan]: San Paolo, 2001-2006). For a brief biographical sketch in context see John Zucchi, "Luigi Giussani, the Church and Youth in the 1950s," in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 10:4 (Fall 2007): 130-150. For an overview of Giussani's theory of education see Holly Margaret Paterson, *Relationship of the educational pedagogy of Luigi Giussani to the American high school of the 21st century*, unpublished Ed.D. diss., University of San Francisco, 2000.

<sup>58</sup> The other philosophical commentary, from the perspective of Continental philosophy and overwhelmingly positive, is Roberto Di Ceglie's *Luigi Giussani: Una religione per l'uomo* (Siena: Cantagalli, 2007).

and tested in advance of any application to life's problems. To this end, a forum was set up for the weekly study of his works, *Scuola di Comunità* (School of Community), which continues to convene right up to the present day in groups of varying sizes all around the world wherever two or more followers of CL happen to be living. My first intimations of a philosophical monograph on Giussani began with my experience of reading Giussani in the School of Community.

### *The Problem*

I want to articulate a problem that relates to how Giussani's interested readers experience his texts. The reception of an author's work is an indicator of more than one kind of phenomenon. Textual commentators, such as intellectual historians, for example, may examine the reception of an author's work to identify an author's supporters and adversaries, helping them to identify him with different camps or schools of thought, or to view different sides of the author's life and work through the lens of his contemporaries' concerns (e.g., "Christopher Dawson as historian," "Dawson as archaeological judge," "Dawson as anthropologist").<sup>59</sup> Reception serves another purpose, as well: one that is more in line with reader-response criticism. It focuses on the reader's experience of a text from its subjective and objective sources. To the extent that experience is considered from the subjective side, the cause lies *in the reader*. To the extent that it is seen from the objective side, the cause lies *in the text*. Since I do not have privileged access to the thoughts of Giussani's readers, my attention will be directed to the objective cause of experience: features of Giussani's text that affect coherence and clarity through their own internal relations.

I seek the causal features of reader-response within Giussani's texts themselves on account of my own experience of reading them either alone or with followers of CL with whom I met on a weekly basis from 2005-2010 at the Schools of Community in Montreal, Edinburgh, and Toronto. The purpose of the School of Community, according to Giussani, was to foster reflection, concretely and personally, on the meaning of his texts vis-à-vis the actual attempts of readers to put his recommendations into practice in daily intercourse.

---

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Stuart, *Christopher Dawson in Context: A Study in British Intellectual History between the World Wars*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2009, chapter 1.

The young men and women who were invited to participate in the meetings were asked to compare the questions arising from their own experience of life, that is, to face problems on the basis of a prior experience, with criteria or ideals already verified or otherwise through experience. It is through lived experience, attentively reflected upon, and, therefore, through a realistic, rather than an abstract dialectic, that the original criteria, the authentic exigencies [of the heart] come more clearly to light (*MCL*, 31).

Giussani wrote many of his texts for the School of Community and used them “maieutically” as the basis to give birth to the truth planted in the heart of every human being, relying on dialogue, intelligent questioning, and ability of his interlocutors to exercise reason and make logical connections.<sup>60</sup> He viewed the School of Community as conducive to evangelization because it engaged the intellectual abilities of his interlocutors (far more, it was thought, than older styles of catechesis based on the memorization of precepts and prohibitions). Giussani’s method taught readers how to appropriate truth-claims by turning them into hypotheses and testing them for existential and human validity. My experience of the School of Community, however, showed that these meetings could easily become attempts to alleviate the burden of Giussani’s texts: viz., unconventional and esoteric language, and the appearance of inconsistencies, vagueness, and prolixity. Strikingly, attempts to assist Giussani with the clearer delivery of his claims tended to reproduce the same problematic features displayed by his writings, delivered in highly abstract and theoretical conversation, frustrating the practical and concrete aims of the meetings.

Giussani’s interest in public life and the activities of CL in the public sphere eventually introduced his writings to a wider and more diverse audience than originally envisioned. The most formidable manifestations of CL’s international reach include the presentation of Giussani’s books at UNESCO,<sup>61</sup> and the annual

---

<sup>60</sup> Dr. Cecilia Zucchi, in conversation with the author, Richmond Hill, Ontario, 30 December 2008. Dr. C. Zucchi was an early participant in Giussani’s School of Community. After moving to Montreal in the 1970s, she maintained her involvement with CL while lecturing in theology at the Grand Séminaire de Montréal. Also confirmed by Dr. John Milbank, in conversation with the author, Mater Dei Institute for Education, Dublin City, on the occasion of the conference “Religion and Belief in a Secular Age,” 10 June 2009.

<sup>61</sup> On January 21, 1999, Giussani’s *La conscience religieuse de l’homme moderne* (Éditions du Cerf) was presented at UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization). The essay was received by delegates from ten countries, with introductions from Bishop Lorenzo Frana

Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples (Rimini), organized by CL, which attracts politicians and leading scholars across the disciplines. A number of Giussani's manuscripts, first published in Italian by Rizzoli, San Paolo, Jaca Book, Marietti, and SEI, are now available in French, Spanish, German, Russian, Polish, Portuguese, Slovakian, Slovenian, Hungarian, Greek, and Albanian. Versions in English were published through Ignatius Press (San Francisco) and McGill-Queen's University Press (Montreal-Kingston). Among his many works, *The Religious Sense* is perhaps the most widely read, now translated in over seventeen languages with multiple editions.<sup>62</sup>

Over the years, CL have invited prominent churchmen to introduce Giussani's books to diverse audiences: Cardinal John O'Connor (writing as Archbishop of New York), Cardinal Angelo Scola (writing as Patriarch of Venice and Rector Emeritus of Pontificia Università Lateranense),<sup>63</sup> and Cardinal Marc Ouellet (writing as Primate of Canada).<sup>64</sup> And, indeed, most of his books are prefaced by members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy: Cardinal Christoph Schönborn, O.P. (writing as Archbishop of Vienna),<sup>65</sup> Cardinal J. Francis Stafford (writing as President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity),<sup>66</sup> Cardinal Josef Ratzinger (writing as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith),<sup>67</sup> and Pope John Paul II

---

(Permanent Observer of the Holy See at UNESCO), Rémi Brague (Professor of Medieval Philosophy at Sorbonne), and Angelo Scola (then President of the Pontifical Lateran University). Translations have since appeared in numerous languages. For the English edition see "Religious Awareness in Modern Man," in *Communio* (Spring 1998): 104-140. It should be noted that apart from two references to Paul VI and one to John Paul II, the only other references in this text are to literary sources: Victor Hugo, T.S. Elliot, and Pär Lagerkvist. Giussani's habit of critiquing the predominant mentality through literature and sensitizing his audience to religious awareness through secular artists is a hallmark of his writing.

<sup>62</sup> Jorge Mario Bergoglio writes: "The Religious Sense is not a book exclusively for members of the Movement [Communion and Liberation]; however, nor is it for Christians or believers. It is a book for all human beings who take their humanity seriously. I dare say that today the primary question we must face is not so much the problem of God – the existence, the knowledge of God – but the problem of the human, of human knowledge and finding in humans themselves the mark that God has made, so as to be able to meet with Him." Lecture given during the presentation of the Spanish edition of *El sentido religioso* [*The Religious Sense*] (Buenos Aires and Madrid: Editorial Sudamericana – Ediciones Encuentro, 1998), delivered at Banco Río, Buenos Aires, October 16, 1998. Published in *Litterae Communis* – *Tracce* 4 (1999): 14-16.

<sup>63</sup> Angelo Scola, *Un pensiero sorgivo: sugli scritti di Luigi Giussani* (Milan: Marietti, 2004).

<sup>64</sup> Marc Ouellet, "An Extraordinary Educator," in *A Generative Thought*, 73-78.

<sup>65</sup> "Preface," in Giussani, *Il cammino al vero è un'esperienza* (1959; Milan: Rizzoli, 2006), 5-8.

<sup>66</sup> "Preface," in Giussani, *Il Senso Religioso. Volume primo del PerCorso* (Milan: Rizzoli 1997), v-ix.

<sup>67</sup> "Preface," in Giussani, *Il senso di Dio e l'uomo moderno. La «questione umana» e la novità del Cristianesimo* (Milan: BUR 1994), 3-4.



(1978-2005).<sup>68</sup> Among lay theologians, Christian and non-Christian alike, the reception has been equally impressive: Jean Bethke Elshtain (University of Chicago), David L. Schindler (John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family), Rabbi Neil Gillman (Jewish Theological Seminary) and Muslim scholar Wael Farouq (The Coptic Catholic Faculty of Sakakini, Cairo).<sup>69</sup> He is also cited by Tracy Rowland (John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family, Melbourne) in her recent book *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict*.<sup>70</sup>

Giussani's writings, notwithstanding, present the same kinds of challenges to experienced readers of philosophy and theology as to the participants of the School of Community. On the occasion of the publication of the English edition of *Alle origine della pretesa Cristiana, vol. II del Percorso (At the Origins of the Christian Claim, vol. II of The Trilogy)*, Cardinal O'Connor was invited to relate his impressions of the book at a gathering held at the United Nations headquarters in New York.<sup>71</sup> In his opening remarks, O'Connor stated: "[Giussani] does wonderful work with Communion and Liberation and is a straightforward, ordinary person to meet. But he writes with extraordinary subtlety and in a very compressed fashion. This time – and I say this with great respect – he has outdone himself in density, even in turgidity. And if you want to grasp this book, you really have to work at it."<sup>72</sup> What Cardinal O'Connor observes concerning Giussani's subtle, compressed, dense, and (even!) turgid style holds true across his bibliography. To cite another example, Rémi Brague, professor of medieval philosophy at the Sorbonne, was "offended" by Giussani's handling of philosophical materials in *Religious Awareness in Modern Man*, and found that the only way to set aside his scholarly dismay was to

---

<sup>68</sup> John Paul II, "Al Reverendo Monsignore Luigi Giussani, Fondatore del Movimento Comunione e Liberazione," in *Luigi Giussani, Il Movimento di Comunione e Liberazione* (Cinisello Balsamo [Milan]: Edizioni San Paolo, 2002), 5-8.

<sup>69</sup> Farouq is a professor of Islamic Sciences and Philosophy at the Coptic Catholic Faculty of Sakakini in Cairo. He contributes to Benedict XIV's book *Dio salvi la ragione* (Siena: Cantagalli, 2007), along with Robert Spaemann and other authors, re-reading the origins of Arabic reason in response to Benedict XVI's Papal Address "Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections," delivered at the University of Regensburg on September 12, 2006.

<sup>70</sup> Tracy Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 66-67.

<sup>71</sup> This lecture was held in New York on May 24, 1999 in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library at the United Nations Headquarters before a mixed audience of over 1000 civilians and political dignitaries, religious and non-religious alike.

<sup>72</sup> "Mystery Incarnate," in *A Generative Thought*, 100. First published as "The Believer at the Threshold of the Third Millennium," suppl. to *Litterae Communis – Tracce* 7 (1999).

“propose a simple, entirely personal, and perhaps subjective reading” of the author.<sup>73</sup> Brague’s ultimate approach to Giussani’s text was not incompatible with the kind of engagement Giussani had hoped to elicit from the School of Community: “a simple, entirely personal, and subjective reading.” At the same time, Brague’s non-academic reading still leaves the original problem of Giussani’s handling of philosophical materials intact. To conclude, then, two kinds of problem dog Giussani’s texts as evidenced in the experience of his readers: his handling of philosophical materials, and various kinds of vagueness.

### *Hypothesis*

Over the past several paragraphs, I have tried to convey that Giussani’s project is relevant to a lively community of readers and worthy of continued attention; but that it is, at the same time, encumbered by its own rhetorical and logical peculiarities: burdened, that is, by areas of vagueness, inconsistency, ambiguity, and prolixity. It is at this point that I intervene to assist Giussani with his task and to be of service to his readers. My purpose, however, is not to say what Giussani meant to say according to my own preferred manner of expression. The best metaphor for the work I will undertake is etiological, involving the diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of disease through the analysis of cause and effect.<sup>74</sup> The disease, in this case, is vagueness. The differential diagnosis includes the following probable causes.

- i. *Institutional Sensitivity* – the vagueness caused by trying to remain orthodox while addressing areas of concern that challenge the establishment. Giussani’s writing, in this case, would be shaped by his sensitivity to its reception by ecclesiastical officials (the unintended audience), on the one hand, and his young interlocutors (the intended audience), on the other hand.
- ii. *Grand Narrative* – the vagueness caused by recommending claims to a general audience as the ultimate answer to a universal problem. It assumes the same questions, axioms, and beliefs across diverse enquirers

---

<sup>73</sup> Rémi Brague, “Christianity: A Fact in History” in *A Generative Thought*, 34-39; here 34-35.

<sup>74</sup> Nicholas, “Reparative Reasoning,” in *Modern Theology* 24:3 (July 2008): 447-457.

irrespective of history, culture, language, and context. Conversely, to recommend claims to a specific enquirer is to offer a precise response to a particular question at a particular time and place, which differs from other questions of other cases in other times and places.

- iii. *Competing Tendencies* – the vagueness caused when two or more opposing tendencies are applied by a method of analysis to the same problem toward a solution, e.g., in the realm of knowledge, to base accounts of reality on the ideal image within and, at the same time, to let reality reveal itself in itself.
- iv. *Philosophical Naiveté* – the vagueness caused by the absence of insight into a previously-established field of enquiry which leads an author cautiously to avoid areas of technicality or otherwise boldly to overstep the bounds of his expertise. Symptoms include lacunae, superficiality, caricaturing, and the positing of agreement between two or more authors or schools of thought with which, in fact, there is profound disagreement.
- v. *Expediency* – the vagueness caused in the interest of saving time by leaping from problem to conclusion. This is the vagueness of the apologist who comes onto the scene with answers ready-made and cleverly tries to convince his audience. It stands in contrast to the practical deliberator who meticulously works through problems from premise to conclusion, allowing for understandings to unfold with time.

Over the course of this thesis, each of these probable causes is to be tested against the text. The prognosis, whether the burden of vagueness can be alleviated, and the treatment, how to repair the causes of vagueness, will depend on the outcome of a pragmatic reading of the text. It will take some time for Giussani's faithful readers to come around to a shared understanding of what it means to read a text pragmatically. For the time being, it refers to treating the text as Giussani's answer to a real question or set of questions.

A real question, in the sense I am underscoring, contrasts with the proliferation of doubt. It is the kind of question that arises because the answer has real meaning for someone. A clear account is always the answer to a clearly-stated question. But not all authors are explicit about the questions they are really asking,

let alone articulate in their formulation of answers. Moreover, the questions some authors say they are asking, turn out not to be the ones by which their writing is in fact motivated. A pragmatic reading of a text has to take into account the possibility that the author's explicit question may not be the only one shaping the account insofar as an inexplicit question may lie beneath it. In all events, to read a text pragmatically is to refer an author's account to the original question he sought to answer, and that question, to repeat the point, is not a paper-generated doubt, but a real problem for someone, which deserves to be taken seriously.

*The Method for Reading Giussani's Texts:*

Just as the reconstruction of Giussani's question distinguishes between that which is stated explicitly and that which is implicit, a deeper understanding of his account hinges on accessing two corresponding levels of text: one which is explicit, the other implicit. Accessing different levels of text implies reaching different grades of clarity through different methods of reading. For this purpose, I adopt the methods used by Peter Ochs in his reading of Charles Sanders Peirce's pragmatic writings.<sup>75</sup> Ochs distinguishes between different levels of Peirce's text, and applies different techniques of reading corresponding to the content available at each level. His overall aim is to use this content to clarify, amplify, and, where necessary, repair Peirce's writings.

*Why Peter Ochs?*

To my knowledge, Peter Ochs is the only scholar who has devised a systematic method for clarifying, expounding, and repairing an author's writing in a way that takes seriously the objectivity of the author's text without falling victim to the constraints of literality.<sup>76</sup> Ochs' reviewers generally admire his work, despite the rigorous demands he imposes on his readers through his highly clinical approach to

---

<sup>75</sup> Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>76</sup> Ochs is wary of claims that speak of the text's self-disclosure, such as those made by Paul Ricoeur and others influenced by Heidegger's phenomenology, because they create an "unwarranted disjunction" between "the text, as 'disclosure,'" and "the consciousness, or 'understanding,'" that interprets it. See Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 307-311.

re-reading.<sup>77</sup> Critics also acknowledge the clarity Ochs has specifically introduced to Peirce's writings, developing Peirce's own logic, rather than using Peirce to advance his own hidden agenda.<sup>78</sup>

The principles of Ochs' methodology may be applied to virtually any text, but they are especially designed to treat texts in which the author's deliveries are compromised by various kinds of vagueness and competing tendencies. For Ochs, when a community of readers struggles to understand the basic meaning of a text due to an author's confusing use of language, the burdens imposed by his ambiguity are deemed "irredeemable," insofar as no amount of poring over can serve to dispel the text's lack of clarity. The matter of "irredeemability," according to Ochs, turns on the interpretation of signs. Signs are normally understood using a complex set of inferences through which a rule is posited to interpret a single case. But the introduction of a novelty in a sign system places an author's account in a genus that is unfamiliar to the reader. This is precisely the situation with readers handling Giussani's texts for the first time, even some who are deeply travelled in the Catholic tradition, for they are often bewildered by the neologisms and unusual logic he deploys; nevertheless, they are urged by him to keep working at the text, trying to grasp the essence of its content due to its handling of an urgent problem concerning humanity that needs solving. The points at which readers tend to fall into confusion are where I intervene with Ochs' method of reading.

Ochs approaches the task of re-reading a text not by attempting to establish authorial intent, but by uncovering the needs of the author's tradition and the worries that may have prompted his writing. What Ochs adds to interpretation is, in his own words, "the activity of diagramming linguistic usage." His premise is as follows: "While not essential to everyday practice, writing is in this sense essential to the activity of changing everyday practice; practical artisans – who are responsible for correcting everyday practice – are prototypically writers."<sup>79</sup>

Applied to Giussani's bibliography, Ochs' method of re-reading achieves different grades of clarity by excavating different levels of text, explicating the

<sup>77</sup> See: Ulf Zackariasson, "Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture by Peter Ochs," in *Ars Disputandi* [[http:// www.ArsDisputandi.org](http://www.ArsDisputandi.org)], 7 (2007), paragraph 5 and 7, accessed May 9, 2011.

<sup>78</sup> See: Robert S. Corrington, "Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture by Peter Ochs," in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 67.3 (1999): 698-700.

<sup>79</sup> Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 320-321.

meaning, and where necessary, repairing problems. While my application of Ochs' method will demand perseverance from my readers, it offers me the unique advantage of presenting the plain-sense of Giussani's texts, introducing his works to an English-language readership for the first time. Moreover, the plain-sense gives my readers first-hand experience of Giussani's vagueness and of the need to introduce clarity in his work. At a later stage of reading, I demonstrate the kinds of repair that are required, where precisely they are to be made, and how they may be carried out.

### *Ochs' Method*

Ochs subjects Peirce's texts on pragmatism, which he describes as "irredeemably vague," to two methods of reading. The first method is called "plain-sense" and is concerned only with the author's explicit text. It attempts only to rehearse the author's account as he gives it, without adding new materials, tying up loose ends, connecting ideas, or completing incomplete thoughts. The second method is called "deeper plain-sense." This method relates the origin of the account to what the author was "afraid of" (to borrow Iris Murdoch's way of putting it). But since the motivating force behind an author's writing need be neither revealed nor conscious, the work of excavating the deeper plain-sense, rendering explicit what is implicit, must rely on history, language, and culture. The use of historical sources involves testing ostensible targets against the text. The driving question, once reconstructed, is demonstrably connected to the situation which arose in the author's context and on account of which he was prompted to set his thoughts to paper.

The interpretive opportunities afforded by history can often be overlooked by readers. It was R. G. Collingwood who identified the mistake of extricating accounts from their contextual origins in order to treat them as though they were rules. Rules, unlike accounts, are forged in predicaments which have been abstracted from localized situations through a process of generalization. This process anticipates the application of a rule to all analogous cases in a timeless, universal, and ultimate manner. Pragmatism corrects this typically Cartesian-Kantian tendency, treating problems less abstractly. Re-reading a text pragmatically means treating it as the author's concrete answer to a real problem for someone, rather than as a rule

intended for everyone at all times and in all places. While an author's response is immediate and tailor-made to the situation that arose, his tendency may be to view his project on a more epic scale, recommending his text to everyone.<sup>80</sup> For the pragmatic reader, however, the author's writing is seen as his attempt to change the errant practices of his localized community. In order to understand the text in the light of the repairs it was generated to effect, the pragmatic reader must reconstruct the author's original concern. Only by re-reading a text with this goal in mind may the reader introduce clarity where the author has been vague or seemingly inconsistent.

I use the techniques of Ochs' deeper plain-sense reading to reconstruct the problem that motivated Giussani's writing. This involves reinserting his texts back into history. My intention is to identify what Giussani thought was at stake that caused him to put things in one way rather than in some other. In being able to demonstrate why the account took form *x* rather than form *y*, e.g., where *x* stands for a vague delivery and *y* for a clear one, I hope to frame problematic features of the account more even-handedly. The search for an explanation in history, therefore, will allow readers to treat the idiosyncrasies of Giussani's writings as problematic in themselves without dismissing his texts as inadequate writ large, and to announce areas of repair without being iconoclastic.

The process that makes reliable the causal link between audience and account is more subtle than relating theses to hypothetical questions and ostensible targets (though this is certainly an important first step). It involves retracing the application of the author's habits of thought (i.e., leading tendencies, such as Cartesian-Kantian habits of enquiry) to their origins in the author's training in a tradition. I identify Giussani's habits of thought by creating some contrast with other authors, whose explicit question is identical to Giussani's, but whose accounts differ due to their historical particularities. The choice of leading tendencies in Giussani's texts are identified with reference to: 1) culture – e.g., the rise of Italian communism, 2) context – e.g., the Ambrosian Church of Milan, 3) biography – e.g., Giussani's career as teacher, pastor, and university lecturer, 4) intellectual history – e.g., Giussani's

---

<sup>80</sup> Collingwood, *An Autobiography*, 103.

training and sources, and 5) the logic of the argument – e.g., the role and function of epistemology in Giussani's bibliography.

### *Chapters and Structure of Analysis*

Each chapter of my thesis deals with a thematic area of enquiry. There are three chapters in all. My purpose in each chapter, as mentioned above, is to diagnose the cause(s) of vagueness and competing tendencies in Giussani's writings and to identify his problematic handling of philosophical materials, while treating the author's responses as serious and adequate *en face* of the problems and pressures he faced in charting a new course for evangelization in the university milieu. The diagnosis is achieved by probing history to find the causal links between the formulation of the author's theses through habits of thought (i.e., leading tendencies), and the actual problems that arose from real situations and pressures which impinged on his freedom, restraining his responses in certain ways. Those restraints need to be determined from the implicit account. While Giussani himself relates the explicit account, which I rehearse in the plain-sense section, the implicit account, in the deeper plain-sense section, is the result of careful research.

The following chart maps my chapters according to the themes and texts under analysis, and indicates the division of labour according to different categories. Each chapter is divided into five sections, which I organize procedurally according to the scientific method. I include the subtler distinctions, drawn from my observations of the author's theses and his explicit questions, including the intended audience, and flag possible areas for repair. The information is offered in broad strokes as an outline, attending its fuller explication later.



**Figure 1.0 Map of My Thesis: Including the Division of Tasks in Chapters and Sections**

		<b>Problem(s)</b>	<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Re-Reading</b>	<b>Observations</b>	<b>Repair(s)</b>
<b>Judgement Chapter 1</b>	<i>Il Senso Religioso</i> (tr. <i>The Religious Sense</i> by John Zucchi)	1.The term heart is used variously and equivocally. 2.Generally, the heart posits a religious core: “We seek, and behold: God is.”	The heart addresses problems of authority: I can believe/obey and still know that I am free if I make a judgement about the certitude of faith from the heart; heart and tradition are the same.	<i>Plain-Sense:</i> The heart is the basis of elementary needs, including God. <i>Deeper Plain-Sense:</i> Authoritarianism, moralism, and cultural rebellion in the 60s are remedied by emphasis on the heart rather than tradition.	1. Since what is universal is in the heart, and intuitions are in the heart, then intuitions are universal. But what do we do in the case of rival intuitions? 2.What is the role of Revelation, tradition, and education?	1.Intuitions are habits of thought, different from instincts. 2.God’s existence ought to be presupposed. 3. Tradition forms the heart and is not tacked onto the heart as the conclusion to an hypothesis.
<b>Freedom Chapter 2</b>	<i>L’io, il potere, e le opere</i>	The attempt to deliver practical-theories-to-live-by succumbs to impersonal accounts, and thus to abstraction, theory, and universal prescription.	“How” questions receive “Why” answers. Answers grounded in essentialist claims about the person; little time devoted to developing the impersonal account needed to do so.	<i>Plain-Sense:</i> 1.The truth (in your heart) sets you free (Jn. 8:32). 2. Only when we harmonise doctrine with public life will the heart have a home in this world. <i>Deeper Plain-Sense:</i> to return religion to the public sphere.	Epistemology reinforces impersonal account; communal self-reflection seeks to recover a practical motive; the Magisterium corrects error in the community’s self reflection with impersonal accounts.	1.An account of practical deliberation is needed to achieve the account of freedom’s pragmatic purport. 2.Requires a clearer distinction between first and second nature or between instinct and intuition.
<b>Beauty Chapter 3</b>	<i>Affezione e dimora</i>	The term beauty is meant to address concrete and particular problems in theology, but the account is abstract and universal.	The implicit question and subtext concerns the apparent contradiction between hope and untidy endings.	<i>Plain-Sense:</i> Beauty is there to be sought; Christ is the beauty we seek. <i>Deeper Plain-Sense:</i> how is the subject’s emotional and affective life included in the act of faith?	The harmonious resolution of binaries overlooks the effects of sin and the inability to attain tidy endings in all cases.	An account of sin and its effects is needed, supplemented by an account that draws a clear link between habit and action.

Each chapter also devotes a substantial section to reconstructing Giussani’s application of leading tendencies. Leading tendencies are the habits of thought

applied by the author to a problem that arises in the contextual milieu of his day. They are responsible for the generation of theses through the author's consideration of the objective problem itself, of the intended audience to whom the solution is recommended, and of materials selected from his background and repertory to formulate responses. I regard Giussani's leading tendencies as his best attempt to apply resources available to him *en face* of the problem he faced. The following chart reviews the leading tendencies of his arguments in three thematic areas organized by chapter headings, including relevant sources and targets inasmuch as they can be excavated from the investigation of intellectual history, context, biography and the logic of enquiry. Once again, the presentation of information is cursory, serving only as a guide for now, attending its fuller explication later.

**Figure 1.2 Searching for an Explanation in History**

	Leading Tendencies	Sources	Targets
<i>Judgement</i> Chapter 1	<i>Anti-Idealism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heideggerian Lines of Thought</li> </ul> <i>Augustinian-Thomism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After Neo-Scholasticism</li> </ul> <i>Non-Philosophical Romanticism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prophetic genius of poets regarding destiny</li> </ul>	John Henry Newman Maurice Blondel Hannah Arendt Augustine of Hippo Jesuit Thomism (K. U. Leuven) Giacomo Leopardi	<i>Explicit target:</i> Enlightenment rationality  <i>Implicit target:</i> Neoscholasticism; manualist tradition in moral theology
<i>Freedom</i> Chapter 2	<i>Cartesian-Kantian Epistemology</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personalism</li> <li>• Intuitionism</li> </ul> <i>Hegel and the Community's self-reflection</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil Society</li> <li>• Protagonism</li> </ul>	Maurice Blondel Romano Guardini Karol Wojtyla G. W. F. Hegel	<i>Explicit target:</i> Radical individualism, utopian and abstract philosophy  <i>Implicit target:</i> Moralism; pietism; behaviourism.
<i>Beauty</i> Chapter 3	<i>Hegelian Epic Narrative</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cosmological application</li> <li>• Soteriological application <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↳ That which God permits and untidy endings</li> <li>↳ Hegelian resolution of binaries</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ethical Application</li> </ul> <i>Kierkegaardian Subjectivism</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn to the Subject</li> <li>• Infinite Resignation</li> </ul>	G. W. F. Hegel Hans Urs von Balthasar Søren Kierkegaard	<i>Explicit target :</i> Stoicism and cynicism  <i>Implicit target :</i> Theology of the disinterested and disembodied person.

*Diagnostics*

Each chapter makes use of insights from select authors to create some contrast with Giussani's writings and to assist with the initial diagnosis of vagueness. Just as it is sometimes easier to say what something is by saying what it is not, the precise points at which two or more authors answering the same question diverge can indicate areas to be probed for the external pressures exerting themselves on the author's thought. The authors used for contrast need not have had a direct influence on Giussani to be useful for our purposes: while it is important that their accounts share Giussani's explicit targets, the difference between them is what facilitates the identification of leading tendencies. Chapter 1, "Judgement," makes use of Newman and Blondel to mark Giussani's association with experiential-expressivist theology (in contrast with cultural-linguistic theology). The categories experiential-expressivist and cultural-linguistic are borrowed from George Lindbeck.<sup>81</sup> Chapter 2, "Freedom," uses Spaemann's account of freedom not so much to expound the authors' shared questions and axioms, but to indicate the implications of Giussani's belief, different from Spaemann's, that intuitions are first nature. Chapter 3 sheds light on Giussani's conception of beauty using Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Theodramatics*, with which Giussani was familiar. The contrast highlights Giussani's pragmatic application of "synthesis" and "harmony," categories intrinsic to the authors' accounts of beauty, to the lived experience of his interlocutors.

The pragmatic reading of each chapter, as indicated above, is followed by observations, which similarly enlist the help of theologians to expound the implications of Giussani's leading tendencies. These observations are crucial to obtaining the prognosis and announcing areas for repair. The choice of authors, then, is directly influenced by the leading tendencies that need to be examined chiefly for their effects on the role and importance of the Catholic tradition, to which Giussani is leading his readers. Chapter 1 uses Fergus Kerr's insights (following St. Thomas Aquinas and the later Wittgenstein) to identify the ostensible effects of Giussani's epistemology. In Chapter 2, I examine how Giussani deals with questions of doctrine and the public sphere through the lens of Jonathan Robinson's critique of

---

<sup>81</sup> George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984).

Hegel and its effects on the liturgy of the Catholic Church. Chapter 3 applies the same critique to Giussani's notion of beauty and protagonism that Ben Quash applies to Balthasar's concept of drama, viz., concerning Giussani and Balthasar's tendency to resolve binaries in tidy endings.

*What a philosopher is "afraid of" (Iris Murdoch)*

I share with Giussani a deep debt of gratitude to the various teachers I have had over the years, true masters of the tradition, who have helped me, since my baptism as an infant, to travel ever more deeply into the Catholic faith. Along with Giussani, I am saddened by younger generations of Catholics, my contemporaries, who live in the Church without desiring to deepen their commitment to Christ or who abandon religious belief and practice altogether. I recognize with him the need to re-evangelize the baptized and of doing so through a more engaging and sympathetic method than that afforded by apologetics or rehearsing moral prohibitions. And I certainly agree that beauty – natural and man-made – in its various forms and media, has something important to do with truth. As I explore these shared interests, the question I pose to Giussani's texts concerns how his writings arise and operate as a systematic engagement with philosophical questions turning on a host of worries related to the Catholic Church and modern society in the context of his time. More specifically, I highlight how the contents of Giussani's writings serve as his response, though variegated and experimental, to the changing conditions of belief and practice in the Ambrosian Church of Milan from the post-war period through the 1990s.

In the sections where I am critical of Giussani, however, certain readers will notice that the leading tendencies in my thought draw on twentieth-century philosophy in connection with certain axioms and ideas of Thomas Aquinas.<sup>82</sup> In particular, I am sensitive to the significance of how theological claims are made, their impact on what it means to be human, and by implication, their effect on the role and importance of tradition in education. In this regard, I am drawing from Wittgenstein's insights on language- and grammar-acquisition, and their implications

---

<sup>82</sup> Cf. John Haldane, "Analytical Thomism: A Brief Introduction," in *The Monist* 80.4 (October 1997): 485-486.

for theology, using Fergus Kerr's interpretation as my guide.<sup>83</sup> I am of the firm resolve that the deliberating and acting subject cannot conceive of himself outside of a tradition, such that beauty (to return to the example just cited), which may serve as an analogy for the divine, is not only to be interpreted from within a tradition, but serves as a medium for its transmission. A living and breathing tradition is not a fossilised record of prehistory, but a school in which intuitions are formed. Giussani also recognizes the importance of tradition, but on different terms. I view much of Giussani's theology from the standpoint of the real impact which that difference makes on how we understand education. This impact needs investigating. For this purpose, we need to turn in detail to Giussani's writings, and especially to the most representative themes of his bibliography: judgment, freedom, and beauty.

---

<sup>83</sup> Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein* (London: SPCK, 1997).

## CHAPTER ONE

## Judgement

*Il realismo esige che, per osservare un oggetto in modo tale da conoscerlo, il metodo non sia immaginato, pensato, organizzato o creato dal soggetto, ma imposto dall'oggetto. — Luigi Giussani, 1988.<sup>1</sup>*

## INTRODUCTION

## Preamble

One of the best ways to access the depths of Giussani's thought is to probe the meaning of his epistemology. Many of the most prominent themes in his bibliography, for instance, recur to his theory of knowledge and method of judgement. He articulates this epistemology philosophically in *The Religious Sense* (*RS*), a book which is thought by some to be his most creative contribution to contemporary theology. The themes of freedom (Chapter 2) and beauty (Chapter 3) are themselves heavily reliant on this epistemology, and, therefore, make important use of the interpretive work I will undertake in this chapter.

Giussani, as a priest and teacher of university and high school students, intellectually interested in modernity and concerned to respond to its hostility toward religion and morality,<sup>2</sup> had identified secularism as the tendency of the individual uncritically to adopt the opinions of the masses. On the basis of this conviction, he proceeded to treat the problem of the act of faith as an epistemological concern. The

---

<sup>1</sup> "In order to observe an on object so as to know it, realism dictates that the method not be imagined, thought, organized, or created by the subject, but that it be *imposed by the object*. (*SR*, 3 [My translation] )."

<sup>2</sup> The term "modernity" is contentious. The attempt to reconcile Christianity with modern sensibilities was explicitly condemned by Pope Pius X (1835-1914) in the Encyclical *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* in 1907. Giussani himself steers clear of the term, except to reiterate the papal condemnations in his own manner, upholding classical notions of truth, reason, and objectivity (cf. 'modernism' in Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians* [Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007], 2). And yet, the attempt to set up such a dialogue was undertaken, however carefully, by Carlo Figini (1883-1967), Giussani's professor of dogmatic theology at Venegono. It is hard to imagine Giussani was uninfluenced by Figini's anti-metaphysical approach, his preference to root Christian teaching in history and the categories of experience and encounter rather than in dogma or philosophical propositions; for this very habit manifests itself in Giussani's concept of the "religious sense." See "Carlo Figini," in Massimo Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione, Primo Volume: Le Origini (1952-1968)* (Cinisello Balsamo, Milan: Edizioni San Paolo, 2001), 76-77.

solution, he thought, cried out for a method by which to reignite the practice of critical reflection:

[...] in taking the first steps and organizing the first meetings with high school students, I was becoming aware that it was untrue to say [that the Christian message had run its course]. [...] The need for it was still there: and how! The interest was still there: and how! The problem, then, seemed clearly to point to a *question of method*. This meant – I thought – that the content of the Christian message was still valid as in the past; it was still interesting... present as it had been two thousand years ago, in all of its genetic and historical uniqueness. The Christian fact is still interesting: the main challenge, then, involves [having at hand] a method for the rediscovery [of Christianity], [and] a modality for communication (*IPO*, 134).

For Giussani, knowing and judging are fundamental acts of human existence. To some extent, they are among the instinctual acts that make us human; they are among the capacities that make us “reasonable” creatures. Giussani’s method was geared, in particular, to recover the practice of critical reflection in order to restore the credibility of religion and religious institutions in the modern world. Thus, he submitted the self and society to critical investigation, confident that the one element missing from virtually all modern scientific and popular accounts of reality would turn up: religion!

Above all, the ordinary means by which the latent religious contents of the mind were to come to the fore was through self-reflection, viz., interior reflection on the inner self provoked by external reality. Of essence to self-reflection was the awareness not only of what is intelligible and good, but of what is fulfilling. Thus, the faculty of the heart, whose object is perfect satisfaction, was as important to Giussani as the traditional faculties of the intellect and the will. Giussani considered the teaching of his so-called “method” of investigating and evaluating the “religious phenomenon” through the heart as the only way to salvage religion. Moreover, he held it up as a crucial contribution in the urgent attempt to rescue Catholicism from ideological attack, such as it had been under in Milan through the 1950s and 60s *en face* of Nietzschean and Marxist currents.<sup>3</sup> While the conditions obtaining for belief

---

<sup>3</sup> See Giussani, “La risposta dell’umanesimo scienista,” for his early critique of Nietzschean philosophy, and “La risposta del marxismo,” for his critique of Marxism, published as “Risposte cristiane ai problemi dei giovani,” in *Quaderni dell’azione sociale*, 1.2 (1961); reprinted in *Realità e*

and practice, and our understanding of them, have changed since the tumultuous 60s, the last edition of *The Religious Sense* still framed the problem of the act of faith in substantially the same way as it had done on its first publication in 1957: “I refer to the urgent necessity not to give a more important role to a scheme already in our minds, but rather to cultivate an entire, passionate, insistent ability to observe the real event, the fact (*RS*, 4).”<sup>4</sup>

Correspondingly, Giussani pegged “ideology,” “preconception,” “moralism,” and “the common mentality” as philosophical adversaries of the “religious phenomenon.” His ally, conversely, is “realism.” The rationale for teaching the particular method expounded in *The Religious Sense* lies in what he purports to be the epistemological inadequacy of other methods, particularly those more typical of academic enquiry (*RS*, 6). Realism called for an alternative approach, such as Giussani summons in the epigraph quoted above: “Realism necessitates that, in order for an object to be observed and so to be known, its method must not be imagined, thought of or schematized and created by the subject: it must be imposed *by the object* (*RS*, 5 [My translation] ).”

In response to the hegemony of the sciences, whose methods require supposedly harder proofs, Giussani insists that there are different tools suited to different tasks. With regards to knowing, evaluating, and appropriating the “religious phenomenon,” the tool, *par excellence*, is indeed the heart. Given to each one by God, the heart denotes a metaphysical region of the human person, the centre of the person’s emotional-affective responsivity, equipped to evaluate reality on the basis of “original” and “universal” “criteria” and “evidences.” If the heart is essential to Giussani’s method of verification, it is the exclusion of the heart from other methods of enquiring into the “religious phenomenon” that he finds particularly objectionable. This chapter will delve more deeply into Giussani’s account of the

---

*giovinanza: la sfida* (Turin: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1995), 135. An informative reconsideration of the riots in May 1968 at French universities, with particular focus on the philosophical roots of the movement, can be found in Vincent Cespedes, *Mai 68, La philosophie est dans la rue!* (Paris: Larousse, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> *The Religious Sense*, translated by John Zucchi (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen’s University Press). Originally published as *Il senso religioso*. Gioventù Italiana di Azione Cattolica. Presidenza Diocesana Milanese (Milan: Fontes Seniores, 1957). Revised as *Il Senso Religioso: Primo Volume del PerCorso* [sic.] (Milan: Jaca Book, 1986; reprint, Milan: Rizzoli, 1995, 1997). All quotations are from the McGill/Queen’s editions, unless otherwise indicated.



heart as an epistemological act of judgement. It will analyse the account of the heart both as Giussani's universal method of judgement, and as his corrective reading of other less adequate accounts of the "religious phenomenon."

### **Problem**

Several different kinds of material are organized under the heart and the term itself is applied to many different contexts, some theoretical and others concrete. The following is a list of some of the relations written into Giussani's notion of the heart, and the functions they play with regards to the affirmation and appropriation of religious truth-claims, such as the proposition that God exists.

The heart, according to one of Giussani's more Augustinian senses, is the intrinsic source of ultimate questions and infinite longings (*RS*, 47-48). Self-consciousness is the primary mode of reflection in this category, and life's experiences are the primary point of departure, leading Giussani to borrow the vocabulary of existentialist philosophy and the psychology of the self to give distinctive shape to his thesis. Giussani draws out the implications of "ultimate" and "infinite" as follows. *First*, "ultimate" refers to limit situations, such as life and death, which have a direct bearing on the meaning and purpose of life and what makes life worth living. The answers to ultimate questions, therefore, give shape to decision and action, making the heart's instincts paramount to ethics. *Second*, "infinite" has desire as its referent and transcendence as its term. It is the heart's colloquy with itself, concerning ultimate questions and the insatiability of desire, that eventually puts it into relation with God, the heart's final term, its place of solace and tranquility, its fulfilment and destiny. As Giussani says: "All human beings, therefore, inasmuch as they aim toward peace and joy, seek God, the exhaustive substance of their lives (107)." Giussani does not deny the external influence of grace in this process (nor does he explicate it); decidedly, he accentuates the indispensability of self-consciousness to the appropriation of religious truth-claims. Religious belief and practice, or anything else which must be predicated on "moral certainty," he says, begins necessarily with a conversion. The whole process of knowing and judging is underwritten by metanoia. It turns on attaining fullness, not

on accumulating data. It entails the relation between the desiring subject and the fulfilling object, not the cognitive relation between mind, body, and language.

According to another sense, especially as Aristotle delineates in *Metaphysics* Book I, there is within every human knower, and by natural intuition, a propensity toward knowing and reflection; this propensity is directed to determining one's relation to reality (as distinguished from appearances); and seriously undertaken over time, this propensity results in the awareness that reality originates in a transcendent Other. Awe, which leads to the affirmation of a Divine Being, is located in the heart, for Giussani. Following his stance of initial openness to reality, the knowing subject realizes through reflection that everything that exists depends on a prior cause. Reasoning from effect to cause, he concludes ultimately with a Primary Cause, a First Mover. Analogously, the "I's" recovery of "original awe," Giussani says, is the "mature" affirmation that God exists from "the greatest and most profound evidence that I do not make myself; I am not making myself. I do not give myself being, or the reality which I am. I am 'given.' This is the moment of maturity, when I discover myself to be dependent upon something else (RS, 105)."

According to a third sense, in line with Heidegger and other varieties of phenomenological ontology, the heart plays an important role in evaluating the phenomena of the world. It exercises this function according to a set of innate and *a priori* "criteria" and "evidences," which are the basis of universal, gut reactions of respect and aversion to the objects encountered. The heart, according to Giussani, is the standard by which to evaluate what is better or higher, and presupposes what is more desirable, both universally and specifically, in each case. This highly intuitive function is expounded further under the categories of perception, experience, and encounter. In each category, the role of the heart, insofar as it is a tool of moral deliberation, adds affection as a factor in deliberation, in addition to the traditional importance accorded to the intellect and the will.

It is not always clear that these functions are commensurable, particularly when faced with a tension between the inner life of the self-reflective subject (on the one hand) and the outer world of self-revealing objects (on the other hand). Nevertheless, Giussani's insistence on the concept of "maturity" and "authenticity" is the means by which he argues that inner compatibility with outer reality can be

attained, whatever that may be. Giussani calls the harmonisation of inner and outer spheres “correspondence.” He proceeds, through multiple examples, to illustrate how the inner life of the subject and the outer world of real existents are not at odds, but made to complete each other. The term “correspondence” will be defined differently at different points in this chapter; for the time being, it will refer to Giussani’s attempt to ground the act of faith in an anthropological principle called the “religious sense.”

Giussani’s term “religious sense” argues that the human person is intrinsically structured to receive and express religious beliefs and practices. Analogously, Thomas Aquinas posits the human person’s intrinsic inclination to the Divine through knowledge by *connaturality*.<sup>5</sup> The term has been variously defined, but usually designates the person’s attunement to and aptitude for the good (*bonum*). For Thomas, this aptitude includes, according to Francis Klauder, “the experience of self-transcending tendencies in knowing and loving things beyond themselves, [...] and the awareness of the limitation and finitude of human powers,” which all the while “point to an unseen source beyond the self.”<sup>6</sup> For Thomas, connatural knowledge is rooted in human experience; it extends beyond purely intellectual knowledge to include affect and sentiment; and is directed to practical ends. Giussani, however, goes a step further, intimating an innate religious core, one that is much more specific than religious habit (in my view), arguing that it has exhibited itself unequivocally in the devotional beliefs and practices of all cultures across time: “To be conscious of oneself right to the core is to perceive, at the depths of the self, an Other (*RS*, 106).”

Giussani’s idea of a religious core is buttressed by the “empirical” findings of ethnographer Mircea Eliade (1907-1986), whose careful analysis of cultures, Giussani thought, confirmed the presence of an innate religiosity, claiming for religion an anthropological basis; meanwhile, Giussani admitted that the term “religion” could be used so differently at times as to render its meaning trivial. What correspondence proposes hypothetically with regards to religion, which Giussani

---

<sup>5</sup> See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 45, a. 2.

<sup>6</sup> Francis J. Klauder, “Connatural Knowledge,” in *A Philosophy Rooted in Love: The Dominant Themes in the Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: University Press of America, 1994), 263-268; here 264-265.

then invites his subjects to test, is that, despite the semblance of internal conflict, there is intrinsically no difference between the inner self and the existence of religious truth-claims. While Giussani does not, at this point, mention the Catholic tradition, he argues toward an understanding of religion that harmonises the diverse drives and aspirations manifested by a person's individual psyche with Catholic propositions. The possibility of this harmony is grounded in the concept of an innate religious core, *homo religiosus*, by which means the religious factor in human flourishing is said to be as palpable as any of the survival instincts. The discovery of God, made through self-conscious reflection and thus rooted in the heart, accomplishes the correspondence between the inner life of the subject, complete with desires and exigencies, and the outer reality of propositional beliefs.

The notion of correspondence is all the more interesting when considered in light of certain theological associations that attach to the inner/outer relation. Where the inner is coterminous with the individual and the outer with scripture and sacred tradition, the tension to be resolved is between freedom and authority, the outcome of which, anticipated by Giussani, is the harmonisation or assimilation of subjects and objects. From the method of testing all objects against the possibility of a highest good, which the heart is naturally predisposed to recognize and love, correspondence is a means by which to live Christianly. To live Christianly is to adhere to the real. Giussani prefers this method to that of insisting on adherence to a moral code, which he deems degrading of the "religious phenomenon." Belief construed as adhesion to the real, based on a kind of understanding that derives from the heart, is meant to carry positive results both for the subject's freedom, including the spontaneous springing forth of the true "I" from the depths of one's being, and for the longevity of religious tradition. It is the dual nature of the category of belief – open to freedom and subject to obedience – that makes the role and importance of the heart complex and onerous, demanding of philosophical attention.

### **Purpose**

My purpose is not to take a position on correspondence as a discrete act of moral judgement, but to demonstrate how Giussani appeals to correspondence to correct other, inadequate definitions of freedom and authority. Correspondence is a

method of reasoning that differs from the kind employed by authoritarians and individualists. It is an attempt to correct the latter by positing reality as its ideal object. The heart serves as a reflective and objective point of view from which the interpreter has access to reality, the recognition of phenomena as they are, not as we would have them be. To return self-reflexively to the heart for judgement is to place the primordial core of humanity in the balance of deciding and acting, correcting reductionist approaches that exclude love of being and filling in partial accounts of reality with all the intuitable factors at play in qualitative evaluation. My argument, that correspondence addresses problems of freedom and authority, is based on the analysis of vaguenesses and inconsistencies in Giussani's text. I refer the leading tendencies of Giussani's correspondence theory to his primary audience, viz., the members of Communion and Liberation (CL), and show that the unique blend of philosophical currents on which Giussani draws are meant to equip his interlocutors with a reflective method by which to appropriate the traditions to which they belong.

Giussani's approach to standard questions in Catholic theology concerning the act of faith is unusual, making it difficult to comprehend his meaning. Toward the task of clarification, I draw on the analytical approach modelled by Peter Ochs in his analyses of Charles Sanders Peirce.<sup>7</sup> Ochs sets out not only to clarify Peirce's writings *per se*, but to diagnose problems in his writings, signalled by vaguenesses and inconsistencies, intending to correct the way he would be read by a given community. My goal in this chapter is analogous. I aspire to do more than to rehearse Giussani's narrative as he delivers it or to reformulate it according to some manner of expression more suited to a would-be audience of theologians and philosophers. These considerations are not unimportant to my task, and I do undertake them seriously, to a point. But to relieve the state of confusion in Giussani's readers, I resort to the significance of the implicit text. The method of reading I deploy is geared toward clarifying Giussani's work by making the implicit text, concerning questions of freedom and authority, explicit.

I consider clarifying Giussani's notion of the heart for his readers to be a worthwhile task for the following reasons: 1) his work responds to a legitimate need

---

<sup>7</sup> Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

in his community to rehabilitate essential practices of the Catholic tradition; and 2) his approach is sensitive to younger generations of Catholics whose ideals and goals are shaped by the “Ethic of Authenticity.” Charles Taylor coined this latter term in his 1991 Massey Lectures, referring to the philosophical sources that converge to form “the ideal of being true to oneself.”<sup>8</sup> “Being true to myself,” Taylor observes, “means being true to my own originality, and is something only I can articulate and discover. In articulating it, I am also defining myself. I am realizing a potentiality that is properly my own.”<sup>9</sup> This is the background that gives “moral force,” he contends, to the “culture of authenticity” in which we currently live, “including its most degraded, absurd, or trivialized forms.” But if the ideal of authenticity can avoid the slide into atomism and instrumentalism, which Taylor argues it can, what younger generations are actually striving for in self-fulfilment and self-realization remains open to genuine religious transcendence.<sup>10</sup> Taylor writes: “Our being in the image of God is also our standing among others in the stream of love which is that facet of God’s life we try to grasp, very inadequately, in speaking of the Trinity. Now it makes a whole lot of difference whether you think this kind of love is a possibility for us humans. I think it is, but only to the extent that we open ourselves to God.”<sup>11</sup> Such is the hope Taylor maintains against the proponents of secularism. It is hope that also motivates Giussani’s writing.

Giussani’s pastoral project, if it may be so understood, is partly rhetorical, exhibited by his attempt to say old things in new ways, and partly ecclesiological, exhibited by his attempt to direct the moral shaping of community around the living presence of Christ. I am sympathetic, therefore, to readers who, attracted by the pragmatic features of his writing, are nevertheless confounded by its vague, confusing, and, at times, contradictory deliveries. If a proposal for Christian life, which is directed to a given community of readers, is equivocal, it can only be applied to actual problems and irritations when at some point it is rendered more clearly. It is to this task that I apply myself in the reading which follows.

---

<sup>8</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi Press Ltd., 1991).

<sup>9</sup> Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 29.

<sup>10</sup> Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity*, 120-121.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, “A Catholic Modernity?,” in *A Catholic Modernity?: Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture, with responses by William M. Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, and Jean Bethke Elshtain*, ed. J. Heft (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 35.

## Hypothesis

I claim that correspondence can show itself to a critical reader only insofar as that reader understands the narrative as Giussani's attempt to correct a real problem. What was that problem? Where Giussani's account encourages Christians to verify the value of their religious experience in order critically to appropriate it, and where he contends that the rehabilitation of Christianity in the modern world depends on obtaining a correspondence between inner self (i.e., one's desires and exigencies) and outer reality (i.e., religious propositions), I believe he is performing a corrective reading of freedom and tradition. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to testing my hypothesis against Giussani's text. I offer my analysis as one way of correctively studying Giussani's performance, acknowledging that there are other legitimate methods of reading him, as well.

## Method

Taking my orientation from the School of Community, my writing is stimulated by the desire to understand Giussani's pragmatic writing so that it may enable his readers to travel more deeply into the Catholic tradition; but since certain passages are burdened by vagueness and inconsistency, I have chosen to approach his texts etiologically. My ultimate goal in this chapter is to eliminate vague descriptions, confusing arguments, and inconsistent definitions from specific areas of Giussani's theory of judgement by referring the explicit text to the implicit one. Determining the implicit text involves reconstructing the questions Giussani was asking in the light of the contexts in which they arose.

In order to study the notion of the heart in this chapter, I will turn to its foundational exposition in *The Religious Sense*, and, therein, only to core parts of chapters 1, 2, 3, 4, and 10, with particular emphasis on the account of "elementary experience" in Chapter 1. But I will also draw from other parts of *The Religious Sense* and other works to the extent that they exhibit more clearly the problematic features and implications of the account. I also take into account the narrative's conceptual evolution from its first, substantially different, publication in 1958.

The analysis will cast light on the implications that correspondence carries for the relationship between individuality and authority, the subset of which involves subjects and tradition. I am interested in *why* Giussani recommends correspondence as a solution to this dilemma. Differently put, by taking history into account, I determine hypothetically *what he thinks to be at stake concerning* subjects and tradition, which accounts for why things are said in one way and not in some other. To understand Giussani's account, in other words, is to reintroduce the text into the context from which it arose as a sufficient answer to a problem.

As the methodology section in my introduction explains, I will conduct three grades of reading, each one to bring Giussani's implicit text into greater focus. Following this analysis, in a section entitled "Observations," I show how some of the leading tendencies above vie with each other in the author's attempt to navigate certain institutional sensitivities in his own times. To this end, I reconstruct the original meaning of the text with respect to its original referents, their worries, and Giussani's attempt to address their worries. In my conclusions, I introduce theological insights from the philosophy of language and philosophical anthropology, through Fergus Kerr's writings, to unravel some of the confusion Giussani creates in his attempt to grapple with epistemological questions turning on the proposition that God exists. I then suggest how some of the philosophical pitfalls behind the author's vague deliveries may be repaired.

Some of the readers already committed to Giussani's descriptions will find my approach to clarifying the meaning of his texts unfamiliar. It may take several chapters to come around to a shared understanding of what "reading correctively" means. I hope that the connections I am able to draw between the historical questions that motivated Giussani's writing and the philosophical facets of his replies will shed greater light on his noble attempt to dialogue with modernity, and exhibit the pastoral energy and sensitivity with which he engaged in that task at a difficult juncture in the life of the Church and of the Italian people. While my own analysis refers Giussani's texts back to history, it is important to note, contrastingly, that Giussani saw himself contributing to a much larger enterprise: viz., devising a universal and timeless method for the return of religion to the secular sphere.



## The Occasion of the Text

*The Religious Sense* has had a long and variegated textual evolution – more than any other work published by Giussani.<sup>12</sup> First appearing in December 1957 through Fontes Seniores, it was addressed to the adult members of the *Gioventù Italiana di Azione Cattolica Milanese* (GIAC-Milan) and intended to guide reflection and study throughout 1958. In 1959, an anonymous essay, by the same title, was published through Fontes Juniores. It recast the 1957 text according to a more didactic style, expounding its basic themes and definitions in nine lessons. As noted in the introductory note of the text (*RS* [1957], 4 and 22), the idea for the booklet was inspired by the archdiocesan letter published for Lent in 1957 entitled *Sul senso religioso* (*On the Religious Sense*), of which Archbishop Giovanni Battista Montini (1897-1978) was the author.<sup>13</sup> (Montini was elevated to the College of Cardinals by Pope John XIII in 1958. In 1963 he was elected pope and took the name Paul VI. He is famous for having re-opened the Second Vatican Council).

The basic themes of the book are taken up again and elaborated with renewed vigour in the 1966 edition, published by Jaca Book (now republished in *Il senso di Dio e l'uomo moderno. La «questione umana» e la novità del Cristianesimo* [Milan: BUR, 1994], 7-75). The basic themes underwent two further amplifications, one in 1977 (Jaca Book), and another in 1997, with a view to its definitive release as the first volume of the *PerCorso*, Giussani's *Trilogy* (Jaca Book, 1997-2003).<sup>14</sup> In 1997, it was taken up again, worldwide within CL, as a resource for reflection and study at the weekly meetings of the Schools of Community.

## Exegetical Considerations

The analysis in this chapter is based on the 1997 edition of *The Religious Sense* published as the first volume of the *Trilogy*. While its main audience are the

---

<sup>12</sup> Luca Marcora, Senior Archivist for CL, description of the textual genealogy of *Il senso religioso*, *Fontes Seniores 1958*, written at the request of CL, unpublished and in the author's possession.

<sup>13</sup> Mons. Giovanni Battista Montini, Arcivescovo di Milano, "Sul senso religioso: lettera pastorale all'archidiocesi Ambrosiana per la S. quaresima dell'anno del Signore MCMLVII" (Milan: Scuola Tipografica Pont. Arcivescovile S. Giuseppe, 1958).

<sup>14</sup> The *PerCorso*, known to English readers as *The Trilogy*, comprises *The Religious Sense*, tr. John Zucchi (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's UP, 1997), *At the Origins of the Christian Claim*, tr. Viviane Hewitt (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's UP, 1998), and *Why the Church?*, tr. Viviane Hewitt (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's UP, 2001).

members of Communion and Liberation, Giussani recommends his approach to everyone with urgency (e.g., *RS*, 11). Consistent with this generalized urgency, the character of the text remains essentially didactic, striving to stimulate religious reflection on the part of those little acquainted with theology, let alone Catholic theology. While it treats the topic of religion generally, and occasionally cites authors such as Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, and Dante Alighieri, the author's attempt to buttress his thesis with secular authors as diverse as Giacomo Leopardi, Alexis Carrel, Franz Kafka, William Shakespeare, and Emmanuel Kant is one of the book's most distinguishing features. Giussani's eclectic use of sources reflects his belief that the seeds of Divine Revelation were sown by God all over the planet. Therefore, while God is most amply apprehended from within the (Catholic) tradition, He does not wish to hide himself from any person of good will who could not have direct access to Him outside the tradition. *The Religious Sense*, in this regard, presents Giussani's basic thesis concerning *homo religiosus* – the innately religious man.

#### PLAIN-SENSE READING

This section rehearses the account of the heart in Giussani's *The Religious Sense* according to its plain-sense. I focus primarily on the axiomatic significance of the so-called "First Premise of the religious sense," through which he expounds his concept of correspondence, summarizing his epistemology's central and explicit claims.

#### *The Cry for Realism and the Critique of Ideology*

Giussani's subject is the objective verifiability of the "religious phenomenon;" but his point of departure is much broader, belonging to what he refers to as "realism" (*RS*, 4). Realism concerns "the urgent necessity not to give a more important role to a scheme already in our minds, but rather to cultivate an entire, passionate, insistent ability to observe the real event, the fact (*RS*, 6)." The cry for realism is motivated by the loss of certain truths, especially on matters Giussani labels as "existential": questions that bear on the meaning of life, what it means to be human, and what constitutes total satisfaction (*RS*, 5). These truths are

pertinent to existence, Giussani maintains, insofar as they inform decision and give concrete shape to individual and social action. The culprit blamed for the distortion or occlusion of truth on such matters is “a mist of ideologies, whims, and appetites (*RS*, 3).”

Ideology, for Giussani, is the distortion of reality through casuistic reasoning. The casuist exhibits the attempt to evade the “inconvenience” posed by plain moral truths using subtle rationalizations. Giussani roots casuistry in the increasing authority of passing fads over and against a passionate commitment to truth (*RS*, 3). A great causality of this weakened sense of intellectual commitment is the “religious phenomenon (*RS*, 5-6).” Its exclusion from reality is consistent with the unwitting, but ineluctable, tendency of ideology to caricature the world of real existents (*RS*, 3). All branches of scientific learning have, as a result, suffered from the loss of the “religious phenomenon” insofar as its exclusion has reduced their ampliative vision and grasp of reality – a point Giussani buttresses with a quotation from Alexis Carrel’s *Reflections on Life* (*RS*, 3).<sup>15</sup> Forged by intellectuals, disseminated by mass media, and assimilated in the common mentality, ideologies are deemed inept and ineffectual authorities on questions of life, including the objective verifiability of the “religious phenomenon” (*RS*, 4-5). The hope by which truth and realism, including the “religious phenomenon,” might be reintroduced into the integral fabric of human life lies in the method he will expound, which requires the individual’s adherence to nothing less than a pure and unremitting commitment to the quest for certainty (*RS*, 21-22).

### *Knowledge in General*

To think through a problem is no doubt a central function of the human mind. This process, however, runs the real risk of projecting the mind’s deliveries onto fact, Giussani contends (*RS*, 4). And this risk occurs because a fact lies autonomously outside the mind. At the same time, it is self-revealing and, thus, knowable. To acknowledge the existence of a fact as that which lies outside the mind, showing

---

<sup>15</sup> Alexis Carrel (1873-1974), surgeon, biologist, eugenicist, and 1912 Nobel Prize laureate in the Physiology of Medicine, recanted his scepticism regarding miracles following a personal experience of healing at Lourdes, France, the site of a water spring associated with apparitions of the Virgin Mary. Carrel recounts the event and its significance in *The Voyage to Lourdes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1939).

itself, awaiting its own discovery by the knowing subject, is to be on the path to apprehending reality (RS, 4). And only the apprehension of reality is adequate to the intellectual life of the “sane” man (RS, 4). Fact, reality, phenomenon, and knowable object are synonymous in Giussani’s lexicon.

### *Different Kinds of Certainty*

The religious fact is distinguished “statistically” as “the most widespread aspect of human activity,” especially when it is deemed to exhibit itself in “experience or sentiment,” and not only in confessions and doctrinal propositions (RS, 4). And yet, what is generally known about the religious fact derives from the opinions of others: “philosophers whom we have studied in school or journalists who write in the newspapers or magazines that determine and form public opinion (RS, 4).” When we follow the opinions of others we bypass the opportunity to know the fact as it really is and so to apprehend it with “moral certainty (RS, 21).” The nature of moral certainty ends enquiry with a personal conviction. With regards to the “religious phenomenon,” it permits the knower to assert unabashedly: I understand what others may be saying about the religious fact, but I know and testify definitively, because I have experienced and verified it for myself, that it is a real thing. Given the pervasive influence of religion as “an integral aspect of man’s behaviour in all times and [affecting] all human activity,” it makes no sense to uphold the fact with any other kind of certainty than with “moral certainty (RS, 4).”

### *The Method in General*

Moral certainty, Giussani has just said, is rooted in knowing an object as it truly is. And this kind of certainty is especially important on matters that relate to the meaning and purpose of man’s existence (RS, 4). The religious fact is precisely the kind of object requiring moral certainty. But to know the religious fact as it truly is, insofar as this kind of objective knowledge is required of moral certainty, is to use a method that allows the object to impose itself on the knower’s capacity for reflection (RS, 5). Only in this way may they be appropriated as practical truths by which to live. From the object’s capacity to impose itself and so reveal itself to the knower as it really is, follows the indispensability of the knower’s gaze: “If I truly wish to know

[the object], I have no choice but to look down and fix my eyes on the object itself (RS, 5).” One cannot know the object as it is if one does not perceive it for what it is.

*Method as Enquiry into the “Phenomenon of Religious Experience”*

In allowing the “religious fact” to reveal itself for what it is, and, in particular, to manifest itself to the knower’s gaze, Giussani points out that “the method for knowing it must be suggested by the religious experience itself (RS, 5).” Let the “religious phenomenon” be treated as an hypothesis to be tested, Giussani recommends. He resorts to direct experience for this testing, but cautions against the study of religion as a “geological or meteorological event” because it concerns humanity (RS, 5). Thus, reiterating the importance of methodology, Giussani adds:

Since we are dealing with something that occurs within me, that has to do with my conscience, my ‘I’ as a person, it is *on myself* that I must reflect; I must inquire into myself, engage in an *existential inquiry*. Once I have undertaken this existential investigation, I can usefully compare my results with the views of thinkers and philosophers on this matter. At this point, my self-examination will be enriched by such a comparison, and I will have avoided raising another person’s opinion to the level of definition. If I did not begin with this existential inquiry [...], I would be uncritically adopting from others a conception regarding a problem for my life and my destiny (RS, 5-6).

Thus, while “opinions” may be sought even on existential matters, the only method conducive to moral certainty involves turning opinions into hypotheses and testing them for validity against the “I.” Giussani goes on to describe this method next in his theory of judgement.

*Experience as Judgement*

“After conducting an existential inquiry, we must know how to judge the results of this self-examination. [...] In fact, without the capacity for evaluating, man cannot have any experience *at all* (RS, 6),” Giussani writes. What follows is a brief delineation of the difference in experience between “trying” (i.e., experiment) and “judging” (i.e., evaluation). Trying looks at experience as “action,” that is, “mechanically establishing relations with reality.” Judging, however, regards

experience as “understanding” and “discovering the meaning” of things (RS, 6; cf., RE, 52). The religious phenomenon calls out for experience as judgement.

*Positing a Criterion of Judgement for Existential Matters*

A judgement is always the result of a measurement or evaluation against some standard. For Giussani, criteria for judgement exist both in the depths of the self as well as in the common mentality (RS, 6-7). The internal criterion, however, is more trustworthy (RS, 7). To assert that the ground of truth is inherent within the self, however, is not to suggest that the individual knower is himself its author, making it highly subjectivist (RS, 7 and 9). Rather, this criterion, which is drawn from our nature, is given to us as part of our nature (RS, 7). “The word nature,” he adds, “evidently implies the word God, a clue to the ultimate origins of our ‘I’ (RS, 6).” Thus, the criterion by which to judge the experience of the religious phenomenon, which is ultimately “to reflect on our own humanity,” has its origin in “the inherent structure of the human being, the structure at the origin of the person (RS, 7)”

*Defining the Criterion as “Elementary Experience”*

The criterion which Giussani goes on to expound, insofar as it is a standard of judgement in existential experience, is described as “the sieve of a primordial ‘original experience’ that constitutes my identity in the way I face everything (RS, 7).” From here on, Giussani refers to this criterion as “elementary experience” (RS, 7). The component parts of “elementary experience” are “needs” and “evidences” (RS, 7). *First*, needs have many different faces, but are commonly sought in the desire for happiness, truth, and justice. They are of utmost importance, Giussani points out, because humans are goal-directed animals, and these are goals that result in action: “prior to them, there is no movement or human dynamism. Any personal affirmation, from the most banal and ordinary to the most reflected upon and rich in consequences, can be based solely on this nucleus of original needs (RS, 7).” *Second*, evidences are proofs, plain facts, presentments of objects as they really are, and, therefore, part of “elementary experience” (RS, 7). To clarify his definition,

Giussani notes how “Aristotle used to remark acutely that it is foolish to seek the reason for what evidence shows to be a fact.”<sup>16</sup>

Giussani further clarifies his position by contrasting it with the “reductionist” tendencies of three other types of knower, each of which he sketches briefly (*RS*, 8). They are: (1) the *idealist* (who maintains that objects are the product of man’s spirit and energy), (2) the *sceptic and sophist* (who demand irrefutable proof that *x* exists as a real thing outside the self), and (3) the *logician* (whose delight is in a game which involves reasoning correctly from premise to conclusion) (*RS*, 8). The point Giussani is making concerns different epistemologies and the distinction between the delivery of partial or counterfeit accounts of reality and true accounts of reality. Only elementary experience, he argues, is conducive to apprehending reality as it really is because it alone allows a “presence” to encounter “human energy” (*RS*, 8). He concludes, here, defining knowing as “an event where the energy of human knowledge is assimilated to the object (*RS*, 8).”

#### *Relating “Elementary Experience” to the “Heart”*

Giussani now applies “elementary experience” to theology. First, he claims that when the bible refers to “the heart” it is speaking of “elementary experience” (*RS*, 9). But one need not rely only on scripture for descriptions of the heart as an objective fact. The heart is a universal concept, he claims (*RS*, 8). For example, while one may expect the concept of the “I” to differ according to histories, traditions, and circumstances, it always includes some reference to an “inner countenance.” What else could this “inner countenance” be but the heart? The heart, therefore, is synonymous with “inner criterion,” “interior stamp,” and the authentic “I” (*RS*, 8-9). It encompasses that complex of “needs” and “evidences” that allows questions of existential validity to be resolved with moral certainty. The heart is also the source of every kind of enquiry; it is “the original impetus with which the human being reaches out to reality, seeking to become one with it (*RS*, 9).” The assimilation of the knower and the object required for moral certainty is achieved by “fulfilling a project that dictates to reality itself the ideal image that stimulates him from within (*RS*, 9).”

---

<sup>16</sup> Giussani cites Aristotle, *Topics*, 1.11.105a 3-7.

*Correspondence and Moral Reflection*

The concept of assimilation, mentioned above, is Giussani's early (read: still undeveloped) articulation of the concept of correspondence. Correspondence will comprise the harmonious unity of subjects and objects, which is an essential feature of what the author considers intrinsic to the ideal of moral flourishing (*RS*, 72). A correspondence, however, cannot be forced; it occurs spontaneously and tends to involve an element of surprise. To the extent that correspondence echoes harmony between the inner "I" and outer reality, it is an ontological event signalling moral rightness, rather than some spurious or subjective state of mind (*RS*, 114).

Correspondence hinges on an "encounter" with the "phenomenon" that is external to this or that mind. Such an encounter leads to a moment of consciousness or moral reflection: "at this point, one makes a fast comparison between [the phenomenon and] oneself, with one's own 'elementary experience,' with one's own 'heart' (*RS*, 20)." A correspondence is achieved when the result of such a comparison permits one to say: "Up to this point, what I see outside fits with what I feel inside, with those needs and evidences that are intrinsic to every human person, with what I was made for; therefore, it is true, and I can trust this other human being (*RS*, 20-21)." Giussani frequently equates correspondence with the mediaeval maxim attributed Thomas Aquinas, *adaequatio rei et intellectus* (the intellect [of the knower] must be adequate to the thing [known]).<sup>17</sup> In this way, Giussani reiterates the concept of adequacy, or rightness, or harmony between the object and the knowing subject as the criterion of moral sufficiency (*CGC*, 216).

*The Nature of Knowing Before the Background of the Human Person*

A fact about the human person, observable in daily life, is that, "by nature, man is in relation to the infinite (*RS*, 9)." The infinite need not be God. The "anarchist," for instance, "affirms himself to an infinite degree (*RS*, 9)." But the "authentically religious man," Giussani's ideal protagonist, accepts the infinite as a principle of completion outside of himself, a goal compatible with the "I's" ultimate satisfaction (*RS*, 9). There is an important distinction to mark, Giussani observes, between the anarchist and the authentically religious man. In the case of the

---

<sup>17</sup> Giussani cites Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 16, a. 1.



anarchist, the strident attitude which leads him to say “‘I affirm myself against all and everything’” is rooted in self-interest and exhibits “pure violence (RS, 10).”

Love of reality, the ability to embrace what is given, rather than to assert oneself over it, is the truer ground of infinitude – the only ground that is life-giving and ultimately fulfilling (RS, 10). It is a matter of course, then, that “nature” should endow the human person with a “fundamental criterion” by which “to face things objectively.” “Nature,” Giussani says, “thrusts man into a universal comparison, endowing him with that nucleus of original needs, with that elementary experience which mothers in the *same* way provide to their children (RS, 10).”

We are certain that it is nature, and not some other ground, that enables this potential to judge according to the universal ideals of “justice, truth, and happiness,” because “men in all ages and of all races approach everything [in this way], enabling them to an exchange, of not only things, but also ideas, and to transmit riches to each other over the distance of centuries (RS, 10).” Giussani reiterates: “this elementary experience is the same in everyone, even if it will then be determined, translated, and realized in very different ways – so different, in fact, that they may seem opposed (RS, 10).”

*The Conditions of Knowing: “Ascesis for Liberation”*

The terms “correspondence,” “satisfaction,” “fulfillment,” and “infinite” have to do with our “becoming adults without being cheated, alienated, enslaved by others, or exploited (RS, 10-11).” We do well, then, to “contradict and avoid” certain obstacles that obscure and alter our “original needs and the ‘evidences’ of those primary meanings (RS, 10).” Giussani targets the “common mentality,” which, in turn, “is publicized and sustained by whomever holds the reins of power in society (RS, 10).” “To ensure the ‘I’s’ pure authenticity, he concludes, it is appropriate to challenge “family tradition or the tradition of the broader society in which we have grown up (RS, 11).” This task, he says, is “neither easy nor popular (RS, 11).” The heart, instrument of judgement, and “source of that undefinable unease,” is “vulnerable” when it is treated, for instance, as “an object of another’s interest or pleasure (RS, 11).” Nevertheless, he reiterates, “judgement is all the more necessary because even these occasional opinions are induced by a context and a history, and

they too must be transcended so that we can reach our original needs (*RS*, 11).” It is inconvenient and personally demanding “to face oneself,” “to go against the current,” and “to consider the totality of factors,” such as the true apprehension of reality demands. We would rather look only at the evidence that confirms “a scheme already in our minds (*RS*, 4).” For this reason, the task of judging from the heart is effectively ascetical: it involves swimming against the tide. Having said that, it is indispensable and inescapable: “in every era man has had to work to reconquer himself, [and] we live in an age in which the need for this reconquest is clearer than ever (*RS*, 11).”

### The Formal Restatement of Giussani’s Thesis

Giussani’s thesis concerning correspondence is an imbrication of many thesis fragments scattered across his bibliography, otherwise referred to as “thesis tokens.”<sup>18</sup> Together, they represent his fundamental response to questions of how to know objects in order that one might know whether appropriating and integrating them into life would be good. The formal restatement of the plain-sense reading above according to these “tokens” is intended to collect the fragments of the account of judgement into a whole and to bring certain features of the act of judgement into relief for the analysis that follows. In line with the nature of plain-sense rehearsal, I keep my interpretations to a minimum. Giussani’s terms are placed in italics for easy identification. Since Giussani’s theory of correspondence is directed to moral judgement in existential matters, readers may wish to substitute my term *p* with any one of the topics Giussani treats “existentially” (e.g., religion, doctrine, authenticity, common mentality, freedom, tradition, friendship, beauty).

- *p* must be investigated by a correct method if it is to be known truly, where the condition of truth is a) “It is a fact that *p* is ...,” and b) the proposition “*p* is ...,” corresponds to the fact.
- Truth is contingent on letting *p* show itself through its primary “evidences,” in advance of analysis. To postulate conclusions about *p* in advance of its self-revelation is to misapprehend *p* (e.g., errors owing to *preconception*,

---

<sup>18</sup> See Ochs, “Thesis,” in *Pierce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 26-27.

*imitation of the common mentality*); ergo, to know *p* truly is to *experience* or *encounter* it for oneself.

- Insofar as truth may be brought to the fore through deeper analysis, the method of inquiry must take into account both the kind of phenomenon that *p* shows itself to be (stage 2) and the kind of knowledge that is desired of *p*.
- Where the kind of knowledge sought concerning *p* is ontological, the analysis of *p* must also consider adequately the *totality of factors* by which it is constituted (*RS*, 20, 59), including the effects of *p* on the knower's *primordial identity* – that complex of “needs” and “evidences” with which nature has endowed us (*RS*, 28). The knower's primordial identity is designated by the term “heart.”
- Where *p* affects the complex of our primary “needs” and “evidences,” the category of ontological knowledge sought about *p* is *existential*, and entails a *prima facie duty* to include *moral certainty*.
- *Moral certainty* is derived from discriminations that depend on a standard by which people evaluate what is better or higher, and presuppose what is more desirable.
- The surprising fact that all human beings have *desires* and *original needs* is observed; but if it were true that the primordial structure of the human person, the heart, were primordially oriented to infinity/destiny, having *desires* and *original needs* would be a matter of course. Hence, there is reason to suspect that ordinary desires are as yet unidentified desires for the Infinite.
- Ergo, where the object of moral certainty is to know whether grasping *p* is intrinsically coherent with the kind of being that is oriented toward *destiny*, the criterion against which to measure *p* is the heart. And since the heart desires the infinite, the “reasonableness” of the “Christian hypothesis” lies in its aptitude to satisfy the infinite needs of the human heart.
- The test of *p* against the heart is essentially an exercise in self-awareness. The results that issue from introspective analysis – e.g., that *p corresponds* to the heart, that *p* does not *correspond*, that the *correspondence* of *p* is still to be determined – are on the level of “*prime-original intuitions*” concerning what is good *for me*. The “for me” collects both the ontological make up of

the human person as ordained by and destined to return to God, and the unique identity given to each one by God (e.g., the talents with which God endows the individual; the vocation to which each one is called by God).

- Given that *intuitions* about *p* are grounded in the heart, *p* acquires an anthropological basis for its claim on the knower, and the beliefs and actions based thereupon have a primordial assurance about them.
- To know *p* truly is to make a “comparison” between *p* and the “needs” and “evidences” of the heart. Such a comparison demands first-hand acquaintance with *p* which cannot be attained except by *transcending* pre-existing repertoires of knowledge and assiduous intellectual honesty.

In other words, the layout of Giussani’s argument according to its “thesis tokens” exhibits a process of verification that turns propositions into hypotheses and tests them against the heart’s original “needs” and “evidences.” The purpose of the test is to attain knowledge of the proposition’s adequacy to the human person. This adequacy is both objective (having a dimension that is “for everybody”), and subjective (having a dimension that is “for me”).

Giussani’s epistemology, in this sense, is essentially ethical: a kind of practical reasoning directed to moral ends, based on universal norms and applied to particular cases. The harmonization of subjects and objects is the ideal state that confirms a proposition’s suitability for appropriation and integration into life. Giussani calls this state “correspondence.” Correspondence builds on the following conditions: (1) a given proposition is initially suggested by the knowable object, rather than by the subject (*RS*, 5); (2) it includes my conscious awareness of the object’s impact on me (e.g., my innate reactions of awe or aversion before a real presence) (*RS*, 6); and (3) it has been tested against “elementary experience” and deemed suitable for me at the level of my “original needs and evidences;” in particular, the truth of the matter is settled in the depths of the heart where adequacy is rooted in universal intuitions about happiness, truth, justice, and beauty (*RS*, 7). Correspondence, therefore, is the state of an object’s adequacy to the ideal of fulfilment. It is a copula that links *the conscience we ourselves possess* to *knowable objects* (*RS*, 121). (4) In a subsequent stage of analysis, the knower might also compare his inner reactions of respect for and aversion to the longstanding custom of

the Church; but only after the Church itself has been “filtered” through the “sieve of the heart” (*RS*, 7)

### DEEPER PLAIN-SENSE READING

The interpretation of any text is always dependent on the author’s choice of terminology. Not only are certain words crucial, but also the manner in which the author defines and uses them in the context of a specific intellectual and cultural tradition. The deeper plain-sense reading below brings into relief the areas of Giussani’s epistemological thought that overlap with John Henry Newman (1801-1890) and Maurice Blondel (1861-1949). Giussani depended on these thinkers for his insights on epistemology and it is back into their theological-epistemological tradition that he is speaking when he writes on judgement.

The influence of Newman and Blondel on Giussani introduces a complex set of hypotheses, inferences, *a priori* conditions, deductions and inductions, observations, intuitions, and conclusions which shape his method and consequently affect our attempts to clarify its more opaque areas. My aim in the following pages to make some important interpretive connections between Giussani’s use of Newman and Blondel’s analytical language, the problems he names and how he structures them, and the hits afforded by history itself.<sup>19</sup> At the end of this section, we should be in a better position to identify how Giussani’s investigative methods account for certain features in his writing, clarifying those features burdened by vagueness and apparent counter statements.

#### *Giussani in relation to Newman and Blondel*

The choice of Newman and Blondel for this task is not at all arbitrary. Both authors exerted a profound influence on Giussani. That influence, however, is nowhere more detectable than in Giussani’s epistemology, where their insights concerning the act of faith are inexplicitly intertwined in complex ways. Behind the thought of Giussani lies the seminal work of another author, Pierre Rousselot (1846-1924), whose famous essay, *The Eyes of Faith*, investigated the absolute ground of

---

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Ochs, “Method” in *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 27.

religious assent.<sup>20</sup> I will return to Rousselot in the third chapter of the present work on *Beauty*. Chronologically, Newman's thought was first to exert influence on both Rousselot and Giussani;<sup>21</sup> it is Newman's influence, along with Blondel's, that is most palpable in the text of *The Religious Sense*, manifesting itself in Giussani's method of investigation.

According to John Zucchi, the Canadian historian of the CL movement, Giussani had read all the works of Newman that were available in Italian by the age of fourteen.<sup>22</sup> The year of that project's completion would have been 1936, and the syllabus, therefore, would not yet have included Newman's *Grammar of Assent* (first translated in Italian as *Filosofia della religione*, Guanda, 1943), *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (Edizione Paoline, 1956), and *The Essay on the Development of Doctrine* (Il Mulino, 1967). These three important books were likely taken up by Giussani in subsequent years (e.g., at Venegono Seminary). As Zucchi points out, in a book like Giussani's *The Religious Sense*, the influence of Newman's *Grammar of Assent* is "immediately detectable."<sup>23</sup> Giussani was also very explicit about his personal admiration for Newman.<sup>24</sup> As I will show, Newman's influence affects, above all, Giussani's handling of the problem of religious doubt.

Another way around to detecting Newman's influence is through Blondel. Some theologians, such as Nicholas Lash, have already proposed a connection between Blondel and Newman's thought: "Of all the major figures in the modernist crisis, the one whose thought comes closest to Newman's is surely Blondel," Lash notes.<sup>25</sup> Giussani's first encounter with Blondel's thought occurred while attending

<sup>20</sup> See Pierre Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith*, translated by Joseph Donceel (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990).

<sup>21</sup> For Rousselot's influence on Newman, see Maurice Nédoncelle, « L'influence de Newman sur 'Les Yeux de la Foi' de Rousselot, » in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses de l'Université de Strasbourg* 27 (1958): 197-213.

<sup>22</sup> Zucchi writes: "I happened to be present at a meeting with Msgr. Giussani in the mid-1990s where about seventy-five people were present. At one point he quoted Newman and asked me if the quotation was correct. [...] He then went on to explain how he had read all these works of Newman [that were available in the Italian language] at such an early age [namely, fourteen]. Any reader of the book *The Religious Sense*, for example, will immediately detect the influence of *A Grammar of Assent*. ("Giussani, the Church, and Youth in the 1950s," in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 10:4 [Fall 2007], 131-150, here 135, and 148-149, endnote 14)."

<sup>23</sup> Zucchi, "Giussani, the Church, and Youth in the 1950s," 148-49, endnote 14.

<sup>24</sup> See Giussani, *MCL*, 29; *CGC*, 234 and 454.

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas Lash, *Newman on Development: The Search for an Explanation in History* (1975; London: Sheed and Ward, 1979), 148. Lash adds, "But, even if, as Nédoncelle showed, Blondel derived his concept of 'Tradition' from a study of Newman, the direct influence of the latter on

seminary at Venegono. The acquaintance was made through Carlo Colombo (1909-1991), one of his professors and mentors, later to be named “papal theologian” by Pope Paul VI. Colombo, a supporter of Blondel, cautiously introduced his thought into the curriculum at Venegono,<sup>26</sup> for Blondel was caught up in a storm of controversy over modernist charges.<sup>27</sup> In 1934, Colombo authored one major article on Blondel, highlighting the merits of his theory on immanence and transcendence.<sup>28</sup> Colombo’s reading of Blondel encouraged the implementation of Blondel’s “new apologetic” (*nuova apologetica*), being a method of re-evangelization directed to those already baptized who ignored their faith. The strategy was to exhibit the pragmatic purport of religion in reply to people’s existential concerns. Giussani, in line with Colombo, down-played the controversy over modernism that dogged Blondel in order to allow his approach to take root in the ambit of pastoral work with youth: “There was still some doubt regarding Blondel [through the years of my seminary training], but there were also already positive appraisals regarding aspects of his work: for example, the idea of the historical nature of man (*la natura storica dell’uomo*) being open as such to the supernatural.”<sup>29</sup>

The ambit of daily life was Blondel’s launching point for theological reflection, however; and this represented a certain reversal of the Scholastic method, which deduced faith from contemplation of the Divine. From the standpoint of anti-

---

Blondel’s thought would, in general, seem to have been slight.” See Maurice Nédoncelle, « Newman et Blondel: la Théologie des Développement Doctrinaux, » in *Newman Studies* (1964): 105-122.

<sup>26</sup> Blondel’s influence on Colombo and the school of thought at Venegono Seminary is discussed by Francesco Bertoldi, “de Lubac e la teologia ambrosiana,” in *de Lubac e la cultura cattolica italiana*, informally published essay, 1995, <http://www.culturanuova.net/accademia/delubac-in-italia.php>, §1 b, accessed April 18, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> The attack on Blondel is documented by Peter J. Bernardi, *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism and Action Française: The Clash over the Church’s Role in Society during the Modernism Era* (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009). More poignantly, any defence of Blondel went against Garrigou-Lagrange’s criticism of his work, which could not have been easy-going, given Garrigou-Lagrange’s role in the anti-modernist campaign. The attack on Blondel’s philosophy was articulated not only in personal correspondence between the two men from 1946-47, but openly in Garrigou-Lagrange’s article: “Letter to Maurice Blondel,” in *Angelicum* 24 (1947): 212-213. Following *Pascendi* (1907), this letter expressed worry that by positing the good as the basis of action, a sufficient ontological basis was lacking to know what would be a true good; and secondly, that by emphasising the importance of subjectivity, objective certitude about the fact of revelation would be compromised. For details on the controversy, see Richard Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Garrigou-Lagrange* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2005), 54, 74-79.

<sup>28</sup> Carlo Colombo, “La filosofia religiosa di Maurizio Blondel,” in *La Scuola Cattolica* 62.4 (August 1934): 401-411.

<sup>29</sup> ISTRÀ, *Annuario Teologico 1984* (Milan: Istra-Edit, 1984), 132.

modernism, nevertheless, Blondel's approach seemed dangerously prone to anthropocentrism. But the rapprochement with daily life was worth the risk, Colombo thought, given that deductive proofs (*raziocini deduttivi*) had not satisfied his contemporaries in grounding the act of faith. Thus, he recommended appropriating faith through a comprehensive vision of life (*totalità della vita*). Undertaken with seriousness of purpose, Blondel's strategy avoided anthropocentrism, Colombo argued, because the supernatural, having been stamped into creation, could always be deduced from questions turning on life's meaning and purpose, and this possibility had been ordained providentially by God in order that he might be known even in the remotest corners of the world. Thus, the quotation from Blondel's *L'Action* (1893), with which Colombo opens his article, is also the explicit approval of Blondel's thesis: "I have always concluded that a careful study of immanence must result in the affirmation of transcendence, not only as a postulate of the moral life, but as a truth of the intellectual order."<sup>30</sup> Further elaborating the concept of immanence, Colombo concludes with its moral implications on freedom: "the method of immanence will tend to demonstrate that man, faced with the supernatural, has the freedom to accept it, satisfying, by this means, the intimate exigency that lies within him of an ulterior order, or even to reject it, rendering himself, by this means, responsible for his own acceptance or refusal of the help offered him (*IPO*, 405)."<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Along the same lines, Colombo writes: "*L'Action* (1893), therefore, was not and was never meant to be an apologetic of Christianity; rather, it was intended to be an integral philosophy of life, carried out in such manner as to satisfy the strictest exigencies of critical philosophy: its religious conclusions did not take away from the strictly rational character of research. In reality, however, this religious conclusion acted in such a way as to have the book considered as a new apologetic (Colombo, "La metodologia teologica dal 1900-1950," in *La Scuola Cattolica* (1952): 453-479, here 402 [My translation] ).

"[...] *L'Action*, we have noted, intended to work out a complete philosophy of life, not an apologetic; but its religious conclusion favouring the supernatural made many see in Blondel's philosophy a new apologetic: an apologetic that sprung from the dynamism of life's entirety, and not only from rational deductions, by means of which to prove the supernatural (Colombo, "La metodologia teologica dal 1900-1950," 403 [My translation] )."

<sup>31</sup> Blondel sees God, according to John Macquarrie, as immanent within man, i.e., "in the sense that human action is already directed beyond the phenomenal order. To will all that we do will is already to have the action of God within us. Yet this quest for realization would be a fascinating one were it not that God in turn moves toward us in transcendence, and human action is supported and supplemented by divine grace." ("Blondel, Maurice," in *The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, edited by Paul Edwards [New York: The Free Press, division of Macmillan Co., 1967]).



*Analysis*

Turning to Giussani's correspondence theory, we may see that many of its key terms and concepts are derived from Newman and Blondel's influence. The attempt to identify some of the main areas of overlap with these authors, as well as areas of difference, will assist in the task of excavating Giussani's method of investigation. For this purpose, I return to Giussani's correspondence theory, which he succinctly reformulated in *Il cammino al vero è un'esperienza*:

If the proposition with which you are confronted appears after a comparison [between yourself and the object] to be the response to your authentic needs, respective of your potential, then you should automatically feel sympathy toward it, and wish to approve it. Saint Augustine used to speak of *delectatio victrix*; but the psychological sense implied in this notion can also be understood as something Thomas incorporates in his definition of truth, *adaequatio rei et intellectus*; i.e., more or less, the discovery of a correspondence between the presentment of the object (or the proposition) and the awareness of [its impact] on the structure of your nature (CVE, 143).

The terms and concepts from this paragraph that call out for attention are “proposition,” “comparison,” “*adaequatio rei et intellectus*,” “the object's presentment” and “the structure of your nature.” The first three terms have to do with methodology (the *organum investigandi*), while the latter two are presuppositions about reality. Each of the terms is related to Giussani's attempt to reinstate the relevance of the religious fact, as he explicitly states. They are underwritten by the claim that *religion is part and parcel of man's natural life and habitat*. Everything that Giussani points to by way of “experience” goes back to this one claim. Its overarching implications for reality make it the guiding rule of investigation, be it for the problem of religion, or any other matter generally calling out for “moral certainty.”

Giussani's notion of correspondence, therefore, is derived from a method of investigating problems that presupposes and is guided by the rule that religion and man are the same. Giussani was not the first to postulate this kind of rule, nor the first to derive a method of investigation from it. Newman and Blondel, also wanting to establish the absolute grounds of religion, and faced with similar kinds of “scientific” pressure to prove its validity, postulated the same rule and derived from it a method by which to establish the “certitude” of propositions. In doing so, they

established what Giussani refers to in his own lexicon as the “reasonable” grounds for the faith of ordinary believers.

### *Newman*

In Newman’s case, the rule which articulates that *religion inherently belongs to the structure of man’s life and habitat* is borne out in the structure of his *Grammar of Assent*. It is itself forged from Newman’s original question, which is not the abstract question concerning the modes of “holding and apprehending propositions” with which he opens the *Grammar*. Rather, as Thomas Norris has pointed out, the opening question is in fact at the service of a deeper concern, provoked by hostility towards religion, regarding how to write about “the structure of believing and faith-life in order to vindicate the faith of ordinary believers.”<sup>32</sup> “From Aristotle, he knew of *phronesis* as the faculty of practical judgement and he wondered if it might be indicative of a way in which people know concrete facts. Of course, this could not be a privileged route to truth, but one coincident with the universal one.”<sup>33</sup> The concrete fact in question to which the concept of *phronesis* would be applied was religion.

Through *phronesis*, Newman wanted to investigate whether “in the dictate of conscience, without previous experience or analogical reasoning,” a child could gradually “perceive the voice, or the echoes of the voice, of a Master, living, personal, and sovereign” from within, which would come to him “like an impulse of nature.”<sup>34</sup> Were certain beliefs not “congenial” to the mind, if not “connatural” with human action, Newman thought, a child of five or six would be incapable of “mastering and appropriating thoughts and beliefs, and in consequence of their teaching, handle and apply them familiarly, according to the occasion, as principles of action.” Often to the dismay of his interpreters, Newman set out to broaden the concept of reason, striving to include within the repertoire of “respectable thought”

---

<sup>32</sup> Thomas J. Norris, “Faith,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 88.

<sup>33</sup> Norris, “Faith,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, 87.

<sup>34</sup> John Henry Newman, *Grammar of Assent* (1870; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1979), 102-103.

the validity of “intuitive” reactions to various phenomena in the world, for he believed these stemmed from and signalled an innate religious core.<sup>35</sup>

Newman’s next step was to propose an *organum investigandi*, a universal method, by which to establish certainty about the “connaturality” of religion, such as he had already done through his observations of its instantiation in children. The method, he realized, did not concern some formal syllogism still to be worked out, but the nature of inference as different from certainty. In formal inference, Newman noted, “the conclusion is necessary, *but its truthfulness is contingent on the truthfulness of the premises*.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, the validity of a conclusion, such as: “*Hence there is reason to suspect that A is true,*” lies in the presupposition that every instance of *C* follows from an instance of *A*. Regarding the religious phenomenon, Newman’s method concludes with the view that religion is fitting to the structure of the human person because every instance of belief in the child postulates an intrinsic inclination to the Divine. The “connaturality” Newman infers is the premise of his investigation into religion. He states: “that such a spontaneous reception of religious truths is common with children, I shall take for granted, till I am convinced that I am wrong in so doing.”<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Newman was not interested in investigating the origins of “connaturality” according to the issue concerning inference, namely, whether reaching a conclusion depends on understanding the terms of the premises.<sup>38</sup> He chose instead the following line of enquiry: “I am not engaged in tracing the image of God in the mind of a child or a man to its first origins, but showing that he can become possessed of such an image, over and above all mere notions of God, and in what that image consists.”<sup>39</sup>

What inference cannot accomplish in the act of faith, assent can. Inference is not yet the acceptance of truth, while assent is. Inference does not require that the terms of the premises be understood for appropriation, while assent does. The acceptance of truth, the proper object of the intellect, enabled by understanding, occurs after one has become attuned to his or her innate religious dispositions. Thus – very much in line with Giussani – what can be inferred about religion in the fast

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Lash, *Newman on Development: The Search for an Explanation in History*, 149.

<sup>36</sup> Norris, “Faith,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, 88.

<sup>37</sup> Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 103.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Norris, “Truth,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, 88.

<sup>39</sup> Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 105.

comparison between an external phenomenon and one's moral reactions of respect or aversion to it (i.e., conscience) is a precursor to the mature appropriation of the claims one translates into living action.

### *Blondel*

With Blondel, similarly, the method of investigation concerning the validity of religion exhibits the same inner-outer dynamism of Newman's approach. Formally stated, the approach converts instances of the religious phenomenon into hypotheses in order to test the validity of religion's central claim, viz., that the human person is innately religious. The condition for establishing the validity of religious propositions, then, compares the religious phenomenon with the (interior) fact of man's innate religiosity. But that innate religiosity is suspected precisely because the religious phenomenon is both externally manifest and observable in man's action. Thus, the innate religiosity of man is both the premise and the conclusion of the investigation.

The religious phenomenon, according to Blondel, instantiates itself not only in doctrine and practices, but initially in the self-conscious awareness of the disproportion that lies between the "I" and the need to attain a certain metaphysical X in absence of which the "I" is left wanting. He writes:

To reach 'the one thing necessary' [i.e., God], we do not grasp it in itself, where we are not; but we start from it within ourselves, where it is, in order to see better that it is by understanding a bit what it is. [...] As we come to define better for ourselves what we are not, through a more complete experience and a more penetrating reflexion, we come to see more clearly that without which we would not be.<sup>40</sup>

The thought of God within us depends on our action in two ways. On the one hand, it is because in acting we find an infinite disproportion in ourselves that we are constrained to look to infinity for the equation of our action. On the other hand, it is because in affirming absolute perfection we do not ever arrive at equalling our own affirmation, that we are constrained to look for its compliment and its commentary in action. The problem that action raises, only action can resolve.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Maurice Blondel, *Action: Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice* (1893) (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1984), 322. Originally published as *L'Action: Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique* (1893) (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).

<sup>41</sup> Blondel, *Action*, 324.

With Blondel's method, the desire for infinitude voiced from within our being is an instance of the religious phenomenon. Infinite desire, therefore, is the phenomenon which he submits to testing in order to secure the validity of religion. If the hypothesis of an innate religious core were correct, then the absence of religious belief or practice in a person's life would necessarily reveal the feeling of a fundamental absence or void vis-à-vis the ideal of fulfilment. Giussani makes the same point: "the more an individual is implicated in an attempt to respond to these [ultimate] questions, the more he perceives their power, and the more he discovers how disproportionate he is with respect to the total answer (RS, 46-47)." Formally stated, if the innate religiosity of man were true, the need to satisfy the constitutive needs of the self via religion would be a matter of course; it would be, as Giussani says, "something *structural* (RS, 46-48)." Hence, there is reason to suspect that religion is valid from the point of view of man's structural needs and exigencies. As Giussani so poignantly puts it: "Only the hypothesis of God [...] corresponds to the human person's original structure [...] if the structure of a human being is, then, this irresistible and inexhaustible question, plea [...] (RS, 57)."

Carlo Colombo's approval of Blondel's method of immanence (*il metodo d'immanenza*), as a sure path to the supernatural, is identical to Giussani's insistence on an inner principle by which to arrive at certitude about the external fact of the religious phenomenon. Action issues in experience; reflection on experience evokes within us a response which is a qualitative evaluation of the experience vis-à-vis the goal of ultimate fulfilment, which is stamped on our being. If the external phenomenon is in fact true, as reflection on inner needs and exigencies is bound to turn up, the result necessarily gives direction to action. Newman considers the effect to belong to the category of assent, where the understanding of doctrine takes on importance. "Under whatever form it presents itself before consciousness, the thought of God is brought there by a determinism that forces itself upon us: it springs necessarily from the dynamism of interior life, it necessarily has an effect; it has an immediate influence on the organization of our conduct. It is this necessary action of the necessary idea of God that we must determine: we shall see how the voluntary

inevitably takes on a transcendent character, and how this necessity is the very expression of freedom.”<sup>42</sup>

### Conclusion to Deeper Plain-Sense Reading

The method employed by all three authors mixes historical and what we would now call “phenomenological” analysis.<sup>43</sup> This method dispels doubt or establishes the validity of propositions by means of the same logic underlying the use of inference, formally exhibited by Newman and Blondel as follows:

The surprising fact, *C*, is observed;  
But if *A* were true, *C* would be a matter of course;  
Hence, there is reason to suspect *A* is true.<sup>44</sup>

In Giussani’s thought, I take *A* to stand for “*the nature we have in ourselves*” and *C* to stand for “*the object’s presentment [to the knowing subject]*.” *The Religious Sense* substantially concerns itself with *A*. As Giussani says, “the centre of the problem is really a proper position of the heart, a correct attitude, a feeling in its place, a morality (*RS*, 30).” *A* is the motive for enquiry; the real existence of *A* is what the author sets out to prove; “*A*” is crucial because it is the cause of *C*, and all instances of *C*, therefore, point back to *A*. Thus, the occurrence of the “religious phenomenon,” the focus of Giussani’s investigation, which human history and literature bear out, as he illustrates with examples from Mircea Eliade (1907-1986) and Rudolf Otto (1869-1937), gives reason to suspect the existence of an inner core that is respondent to and inclined toward religious expression.<sup>45</sup> Giussani calls this inference a “moral certainty,” and refers to the means by which it was reached as an

---

<sup>42</sup> Blondel, *Action*, 324.

<sup>43</sup> Terrence Merrigan, “Revelation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*, edited by Ian Kerr and Terrence Merrigan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 47-72; here 53.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 28.

<sup>45</sup> Romano Guardini (1885-1968), a major influence on Giussani, also mentions Rudolf Otto when he writes about the “discovery” of innate religiosity: “These opinions [eighteenth-century Enlightenment, nineteenth-century Positivism, Materialism, Rationalism, and Romanticism] were repudiated by the empiricism and relativism of the late nineteenth century, and it required the discoveries of Rudolf Otto and the work of Phenomenology that followed them to bring out the original character of the religious factor. Since then there has been rapid development. Psychology now examines the structure of religious experience in both individual and community life, and this has been considerably assisted by the study of the unconscious and of myths. Philosophy tries to grasp the significant core of the phenomenon and inquires what is its importance for being generally and for personal life. Finally, theology is conscious that it must go beyond the oversimplified formulations of metaphysics and fundamental theology, clarify the relation of this general religious phenomenon to revelation and faith, as understood in Christian teaching, and throw light upon the problems in that religion.” (Romano Guardini, *Freedom, Grace, Destiny* [1948; New York: Pantheon Books, 1961], 53).

“intuition.” Commenting on the method of inference, he states, “to arrive at certainties about relationships we have been given the fastest of methods, almost more like an intuition than a process (RS, 19).” Defending intuition from rationalist hostilities, Giussani insists that reason is “not as arthritic or paralyzed as has been imagined by so much modern philosophy, which has reduced it to a single operation – ‘logic’ – or to a specific type of phenomenon, to a certain capacity for ‘empirical demonstration’ (RS, 17).” Intuition, he reasons, concurs with the basic idea that there is, so to speak, more than one way to skin a cat: “Reason is much larger than [logic, theory, and empiricism]; it is life, a life faced with the complexity and multiplicity of reality, the richness of the real. Reason is agile, goes everywhere, travels many roads (RS, 17).”

### LEADING TENDENCIES

An author’s method is displayed by his intentional application of languages of analysis in a systematic manner to resolving particular problems. Leading tendencies differ from methods insofar as they are basic rules of enquiry that, through the agency of methods, guide the production of theses.<sup>46</sup> In the Introduction, I considered how the genesis of Giussani’s texts could be referenced to the real problems he set out to address, such as: (1) correcting, as a priest and Catholic educator, the tendency of younger Catholics to be influenced by Nietzschean and Marxist currents of thought; (2) restoring the importance of religion in daily life and repairing the idealism of scientific notions of progress; and (3) responding intelligently to religious hostility without making concessions along the way. Having thus considered *The Religious Sense* in light of these historical and contextual pressures, I should now like to excavate how the production of theses stems from Giussani’s unique perspective on these problems as exhibited by his specific *habits of interpretation*. To this end, I trace the production of theses in his theory of judgement to three leading tendencies: *Anti-Idealism*, *Augustinian-Thomism*, and *Non-Philosophical Romanticism*.

---

<sup>46</sup> Ochs, “Leading Tendencies,” in *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 27.

*Anti-Idealism* is the tendency that requires the knowing subject to let some as yet unintelligible object identify itself as a knowable entity by its own self-revealing capacity. Giussani calls this a “realist” approach to knowledge, recommending it against the view that objects can be known only insofar as the inquirer is able to think about them and only insofar as thinking is the externalisation of what the mind furnishes and reveals according to its own contents.

### Analysis

(i) Giussani’s anti-idealist tendency follows a habit of thought that, through the influence of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), has found its way into the works of Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), and Romano Guardini (1885-1968) – all of whom Giussani had read.<sup>47</sup> There is no need to pin down Heidegger’s direct influence on Giussani in order to appreciate how Giussani’s interpretative habits arose from the same philosophical concern over real knowledge with which Heidegger was explicitly preoccupied. Since both Heidegger and Giussani shared a common philosophical heritage, including the Reformation, the Enlightenment, German Romanticism, and Idealism, their concern for real knowledge was coincident with the retrieval of Thomistic and Augustinian epistemologies to address the problem of real knowledge.<sup>48</sup> As twentieth-century thinkers, however, their concerns differed in kind from the questions that generated the epistemologies of Thomas and Augustine.

Just as Heidegger’s writing arose in response to a growing suspicion over Kant’s theory that all that is discovered in the world is already in our thinking, so Giussani’s writing arose in response to reductive accounts of religion which he blamed on the errant tendency to know objects based on “schemes already in the

---

<sup>47</sup> Heidegger has been well-received by some theologians. Consider this statement by Walter Kasper, *Glaube und Geschichte* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1970), 9-32, quoted by Gerald McCool, “Epilogue” in *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: the Seabury Press, 1977), 264: “[...] modern theologians are more at home with the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. [...] The Heideggerian thinker responds to the intelligibility of his historical world through ‘thankful’ receptive meditation upon the mysterious holy being which reveals and conceals itself in the interrelated, finite, historical universe whose horizon is not eternity but time.” For a more critical appraisal of Heidegger see Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 73-96.

<sup>48</sup> See Heidegger, “Augustinus und der Neuplatonismus,” in *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*, ed. Matthias Jung, et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1995), 157-299. For an enlightening account of Heidegger’s interpretation of Augustine in *Being and Time* see Theodore Kisiel, *The Genesis of Heidegger’s Being and Time* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 192-219.



mind” (*RS*, 3).<sup>49</sup> Giussani writes, “to think something is an intellectual, ideal, and imaginative activity regarding the object and often, in giving too much weight to thought, without even realizing it – or, in reality, even justifying it – we project what we think onto the fact (*RS*, 4).” As Giussani saw it, a correct theory of knowledge had to respect the observation that objects were of such a nature as to reveal themselves spontaneously to a knowing-subject without suffering the limiting effects either of (a) the extraneous imposition of the knower’s ideas on the object, to which Giussani refers as “ideology,” or (b) the induction of the object under the schemes already present in the mind, to which Giussani refers as “preconception” (*RS*, 97). For Heidegger, similarly, the object was not to be held under the knower’s sway in order to be known, but freed of the encumbrances which impede intelligibility through the knower’s readiness to be surprised by the object’s spontaneous self-revelation of itself in a community of self-revealing objects.

The attempt to arrive at a pure knowledge of the object lead both Heidegger and Giussani to transcend psychologistic and anthropocentric philosophical prejudices.<sup>50</sup> Their writings express concern that truth is occluded when such phrases as “what makes *p* true” are denied a worldly reference. For a philosopher like Heidegger, or a theologian like Giussani, certain psychological verbs, notably “mean” and “think,” provided one of the strongest incentives to put a realist epistemology to work.<sup>51</sup> Thus Giussani writes: “Shall we study what Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Marx, or Engels say about [the religious sense]? We could do this, but, as a first step, the method would be incorrect. When we deal with this fundamental expression of man’s existence, we simply cannot abandon ourselves to the opinions

---

<sup>49</sup> This passage roots Heidegger’s worry in Kant: “[...] does the problem of the ‘transcendental appearance’ not require a liberation from that architectonic into which Kant forced it – in accordance with his orientation to traditional logic – especially if, through the Kantian ground-laying, logic in general as possible ground and guide for the problematic of metaphysics has been shaken? (*Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* 5<sup>th</sup> Ed., trans. Richard Taft [1929; Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1973, 1997], 172).” The notion that Kant might be suggesting that *a priori* knowledge has no grounds outside the mind has typically arisen with Kant’s tendency to refer to objects of human experience as “appearances” and “mere representations.” Cf. Henry E. Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 36 and 297.

<sup>50</sup> Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 86.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Bede Rundle, *Wittgenstein and Contemporary Philosophy of Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 157.

of others, absorbing the most fashionable views or impressions that determine our milieu (*RS*, 5).”

In order to obtain knowledge of the world, Heidegger and Giussani return their subjects from the mind to the world; for it is in the world that knowledge of the world is to be sought.<sup>52</sup> Giussani writes: “By realism I refer to the urgent necessity not to give a more important role to a scheme already in our minds, but rather to cultivate an entire, passionate, insistent ability to observe the real event, the fact (*RS*, 3).” The search of the subject-knower, however, is an act of dwelling alongside the other, an acquiescent loving of being, a passive attending to the Other’s self-revelation, rather than a dissection of reality or the superimposition of an idea onto reality. “To dwell,” Heidegger writes, “means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its presence.”<sup>53</sup> What Heidegger calls “poetically dwelling,” Giussani calls “*affezione e dimora*” (affection and dwelling). In dwelling, truth’s concealment is unconcealed in the object’s self-revelation. The object’s self-revelation is the “bringing-forth-hither (*Her-vor-bringen*).” By existing, the object emanates its identity: “bringing-forth-hither brings hither out of concealment, forth into unconcealment. Bringing-forth comes to pass only insofar as something concealed comes into unconcealment. This coming rests and moves freely within what we call revealing (*Entbergen*).”<sup>54</sup>

Heidegger charges that the “philosophy of life,” “personalism,” “metaphysics,” and “mechanization” – each being shaped by a definition of the human person as a thinking being (*homo rationalis*) – have tragically overlooked the ontological foundations of being, precipitating the flight of *Dasein*’s Being from the world of real things.<sup>55</sup> “In this way,” Heidegger writes, “the impression comes to prevail that everything man encounters exists only insofar as it is his construct.”<sup>56</sup> This impression is the stance of the “anarchist,” which Giussani deplors (*RS*, 9). Heidegger, who sees in this tendency the temptation to dominate, exhorts his readers

---

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Iris Murdoch, *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals* (1992; London: Vintage Random House, 2003), 270.

<sup>53</sup> Heidegger, “Building Dwelling Thinking,” in *Basic Writings*, edited and translated by David Farrell Krell (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 327.

<sup>54</sup> Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, edited and translated by William Lovitt (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 11.

<sup>55</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 74-76.

<sup>56</sup> Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 27

to let reality speak for itself, allowing it to make its claim upon the knower.<sup>57</sup>

According to Giussani, when it comes to knowing the “real event,” “the fact,” since the tendency to “project what we think onto the fact” reduces what we are able to know about it, the method of knowing must begin with an awareness of the fact as existing both independently of the mind, in relation with other objects, and in self-manifestation through its own act of being. Thus, Giussani states: “Realism requires a certain method for observing and coming to know an object, and this method must not be imagined, thought of or organized and created by the subject: it must be imposed *by the object* (RS, 5).” Giussani lends urgency to his recommendation by implying that idealism has dominated inhumane approaches to life: “the sane man,” he says, is the one who “wants to know about the fact, to know what it is, and only then can he also think it (RS, 4).” Thus, Giussani, in line with Martin Buber (1878-1965) and Emmanuel Levinas (1906-1995), exhorts his readers to address reality with the hieratic “Thou.” Referring the I-Thou relation back to the question of the act of faith, Giussani writes: “Religious awe is something other than the wonder from which according to Aristotle, philosophy is born. When otherness emerges before one’s eyes, the human person is not given to posing speculative inquiries, but to venturing, to pleading, to entreating, to invoking, to contemplating. This remains firm, that it is the different-from-oneself and the meta (=beyond) natural (RS, 102).”

(ii) The sense according to which Giussani and Heidegger advance their theory of knowledge holds that truth is “the adequation of intellect to the thing.” The term “adequation,” from the Latin *adaequatio*, as it is used by Giussani, implies a fundamental relation between the inquirer’s intellectual faculty and the knowable objects that stand alongside him, are received by him, and are accorded to him, as measured by the objects themselves. Giussani summarizes this approach using the formula *adaequatio rei et intellectus*, translating the word “adaequatio” as “correspondence.” He writes: “the correspondence of the proposition or of the provocation to the constitutive exigencies of the heart is the criterion of truth. This [notion of correspondence] is a non-literal translation of a phrase from St. Thomas Aquinas that defines truth as ‘*adaequatio rei et intellectus*’: truth reveals itself

---

<sup>57</sup> Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” 27.

through the experience of a correspondence (*adaequatio*) between the proposition and one's self-awareness [*la coscienza di sé*], of that which we are originally."<sup>58</sup> In his attempts to define this formula further, Giussani focuses mainly on describing what it is not. First, correspondence, such as it is concerned to describe the subject's act of knowing, does not entail anything quite like the subjectivization of truth. Second, while Giussani feels indebted to Thomas, and calls his method Thomist, he adds that it is not neo-Thomistic.<sup>59</sup> Responding to a question about his method in an interview, he stated: "[...] I would have to say that our movement [i.e., CL] is Thomist (I said Thomist, and not neo-Thomistic). The definition of truth given by St. Thomas Aquinas [*adaequatio rei et intellectus*], which I have reiterated, constitutes one of the foundations on which our whole experience is founded; it is pure existentialism: therefore, it already contains what might specifically be recovered from Augustine (*MCL*, 29)."

(iii) A "traditional Thomist" might see the question Thomas poses about truth, which gives rise to the *adaequatio* formula, as turning on the epistemic relation of created things to God's mind, where the relation between God's mind and the world is a path to comprehending the relation of the human mind to the world.<sup>60</sup>

[...] if an *adequatio* between mind and thing, which Aquinas takes to be the primary definition of truth, is possible, the measure of truth must be located in either term of the *adequatio* formula. In theoretical reason, the measure is given by the thing, and in practical reason it is given by the mind. The mind is called true when, theoretically, it conforms to the thing, but the thing itself is said to be true when, practically, it conforms to the mind. The truth of the thing in conformity with mind occurs most radically in creation, in which the *being* of things arises from their 'conformity' to the divine mind. This divine 'practical' conformity is what accounts for *ontological* truth, and this in turn is what makes possible the transcendentality of truth, that is, the truth as a 'rational' relation between being and the soul (intellect).<sup>61</sup>

<sup>58</sup> "Riconoscere una presenza," in *Tracce: Litterae Communionis*, 8 (1993): 1-7.

<sup>59</sup> Just as Giussani is indebted to Thomas for the *adaequatio* formula, Balthasar is indebted to Thomas for the concept of *actus essendi*; but for Fergus Kerr, there are reasons to wonder whether these Thomistic debts are warranted: "Balthasar's theological project is very different from Thomas's, obviously, in many ways: he writes after the Reformation, the Enlightenment, German romanticism and idealism, and in conversation especially with Karl Barth; but there is a sense, he believed, in which his work depends decisively on Thomas's concept of God as 'actualization of Being,' *actus essendi*." Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 89.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q, 16, a. 1.

<sup>61</sup> David C. Schindler, *Hans Urs Von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 358-359. See also Jan A. Aertsen,

When Giussani and Heidegger adopt the *adaequatio* formula, the attempt to understand the human mind via analogy with God's mind is dropped. The new problem, purportedly caused by Kant, concerns attaching content to an object before verifying whether such content intrinsically belongs to it. In the following commentary from his well-known essay "On the Essence of Truth," Heidegger explains his own definition of *adaequatio* over and against Kant's radical turn to the subject. As we shall see, Giussani's polemic against the common mentality and ideology, his rallying cry for a return to realism, and his use of the term correspondence, are each in line with this critique of Kant.

The true, whether it be a matter of proposition, is what accords, the accordant [*das Stimmende*]. Being true and truth here signify accord, and that in a double sense: on the one hand, the consonance [*Einstimmigkeit*] of a matter with what is supposed in advance regarding it and, on the other hand, the accordance of what is meant in the statement with the matter. This dual character of the accord is brought to light by the traditional definition of truth: *veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*. This can be taken to mean: truth is the correspondence [*Angeleichung*] of the matter to knowledge. But it can also be taken as saying: truth is the correspondence of knowledge to matter. Admittedly, the above definition is usually stated only in the formula *veritas est adaequatio intellectus ad rem* [truth is the adequation of intellect to the thing]. Yet truth so conceived, propositional truth, is possible only on the basis of material truth [*Sachwahrheit*], of *adaequatio rei ad intellectum* [adequation of thing to intellect]. Both concepts of the essence of *veritas* have continually in view a conforming to ... [*Sichrichten nach ...*], and hence think truth as correctness [*Richtigkeit*].

Nonetheless, the one is not the mere inversion of the other. On the contrary, in each case *intellectus* and *res* are thought differently. In order to recognize this we must trace the usual formula for the ordinary concept of truth back to its most recent (i.e., the medieval) origin. *Veritas* as *adaequatio rei ad intellectum* does not imply the later transcendental conception of Kant – possible only on the basis of the subjectivity of man's essence – that 'objects conform to our knowledge.' Rather, it implies the Christian theological belief that, with respect to what it is and whether it is, a matter, a created (*ens creatum*), is only insofar as it corresponds to the idea preconceived in the *intellectus divines*, i.e., in the mind of God, and thus measures up to the idea (is correct) and in this sense is 'true.'<sup>62</sup>

---

*Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (New York : E.J. Brill, 1996), 272-273.

<sup>62</sup> Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth," in *Martin Heidegger: Pathmarks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 138.

According to Heidegger, the predicate “true,” as applied to knowable objects, refers to “correctness” and “intrinsic intelligibility.” When applied to propositional truth-claims, the test of correctness always has “conformity” as its standard, be it in the “correspondence” of the matter to knowledge, or in the “correspondence” of knowledge to matter. The medieval meaning of matter’s conformity to knowledge, Heidegger explains, refers to the conformity of God’s intellect to creation, i.e., thought created by an Infinite Mind. On the medieval view, things in themselves measure up to what they are in their totality only in relation to the divine origin (*aliquid existens in Deo*).<sup>63</sup> Kant’s theory of knowledge runs directly contrary to this view. With Kant, Heidegger notes, not only are predicate and subject inverted, but the notion of human knowledge and knowable objects is conceptually different from the medieval view. On Heidegger’s reading of Kant, objects conform not to God’s intellect, but to the human mind. Differently put, the problem with Kant is the view that the human mind is introspectively aware of its own contents in a manner analogous to the perception of external objects.<sup>64</sup>

For Heidegger, the general condition of truth, be it with propositions or existent objects, turns on the relation of subjects to objects where getting the correct account of the relation is crucial to a correct epistemology. Heidegger’s reference to Kant, particularly to the Kantian revolution from object to subject, gestures at the limits imposed on intelligibility when a knowable object is not brought under the conditions of objective judgement. For the medieval philosophers, there are two types of relation corresponding to two types of minds. *First*, to the divine mind: created things match up to the ideas in God’s mind where they were conceived and sustained, insofar as they are ever before God’s consciousness (and this is consistent with Heidegger’s gloss); and *second*, to the human mind, for as created things have

---

<sup>63</sup> There are hints here of the God’s-eye view of reality of seventeenth-century theistic metaphysics. Consider Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715), who claimed we “see all things in God,” or Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677), who maintained that the goal of human cognition is to view things *sub specie aeternitatis* (*Ethics* II, prop 54, corollary 2). For a brief discussion of these thinkers in relation to Kant, see Allison, *Kant’s Transcendental Idealism*, 29.

<sup>64</sup> Heidegger holds that Kant cannot be right when “experience of beings is itself always already guided by ontological understanding, which becomes accessible through experience in a more determinative respect.” According to Heidegger, Kant is incorrect to hold the view that what “grounds the legitimacy of these material judgements [*sachhaltigen Urteile*] concerning the Being of beings *cannot lie in experience*.” (Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, 9).

their origin in the infinite mind, their intelligibility is limited by the condition of a finite human intellect (and this is not mentioned by Heidegger). But Heidegger would be in agreement with the conclusion or ontology to which the medieval notion of a finite intellect leads: what is given to the human mind in an object is not an appearance of which ideas are in some way antecedent copies; rather, what is given is the object itself through its own active manifestation of itself. What an object is in itself is known from its active and self-revealing presence to the knower.

(iv) The Heideggerian style of Giussani's insistence on "observing and coming to know an object" does not differ from Thomas's use of *adaequatio* insofar as knowledge presupposes the need of the intellect to receive the object's self-revelation. Thomas holds that our intellect, in this life, "has a determinate relationship to the forms that are abstracted from sensations."<sup>65</sup> He concludes that "each and every thing shows forth that it exists for the sake of its operation; indeed operation is the ultimate perfection of each thing."<sup>66</sup> Whereas for Heidegger and Giussani the insistence on the relation of words to world is revolutionary, for Thomas, the insistence states no more than the obvious. Where else would one go for knowledge of the things in the world other than to the things themselves?

At several points, Giussani seems to be following Thomas closely, presupposing the obvious; viz., that the kind of truth found in the mind is related to the thing that is known. He proceeds on the basis of a commitment to Thomas's ontology: namely, the doctrine that being is intrinsically self-expressive and self-communicating, inherently disposed to manifesting its own presence and open to receiving that of others. This doctrine is exhibited in the following passages from *The Religious Sense*:

[The word] 'thing,' [...] is a concrete and, if you please, banal version of the word 'being.' Being: not as some abstract entity, but as presence, a presence which I do not myself make, which I find. A presence which imposes itself upon me.

He who does not believe in God is inexcusable [...] because that person must deny this original phenomenon, this original 'experience' of the other.

<sup>65</sup> Aquinas, *Expositio Super Boethii de Trinitate*, q. I, art. 2.

<sup>66</sup> Aquinas, *Sum. c. Gent.*, III, 113.

[...] the very word ‘given’ is also vibrant with an activity, in front of which I am passive, and it is a passivity which makes up my original activity of receiving, taking note, recognizing (RS, 101).<sup>67</sup>

A theory of knowledge where “action is exerted on the knower by external objects,” and which “presupposes intuitions and operations in subjects that are alongside objects” may be either Thomist or Heideggerian, or, in this case, Giussanian. The activities of the object are active: to be present, to give itself, to be; while the activities of the subject are passive: to let oneself be struck.

(v) Both Heidegger and Giussani, at any rate, insist on adherence to the real, which is the world of existents outside the mind. Heidegger does not mention in the passage quoted above the standpoint from which he would survey the content of self-revealing objects; but this can be inferred from the complaint running throughout his bibliography that propositions grounded in the subject may misidentify reality. Heidegger, not unlike Giussani, obtains truth from reality. One kind of knowing is ontic, becoming aware of something as a fact; another kind of knowing is ontological, becoming aware of something that has its own essence. The latter involves the relation between subjects and objects and includes a meaning that is *for someone*. Ontology presents itself as a concern, Heidegger believes, precisely when the knowable object is considered in relation to the question: “Who am I?;” and since the answer to that question is: “I am an existing being in the world,” it follows that ontology is derived from surveying the landscape occupied by oneself and all knowable objects. The object comports itself to the knowing subject on that landscape in the “encounter” (*begegnen*) where the significance of the object for the subject comes to the fore. For Heidegger, “phenomenon” and “sign,” like “fact” and “interpretation,” are part of one and the same ontology that begins in the object’s encounter with the subject and is completed in the subject’s self-reflexive awareness of his relation to the object. The process of knowing concerns a habit both of the object to show itself, and of the subject to “encounter,” “care for,” “stand alongside,” and “use” the object.

---

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 86 ff.



As for Heidegger, so for Giussani, ontological knowledge initially poses itself in the question “Who am I?” The awareness of the vast unfolding of the universe is inseparable from questions turning on the meaning and purpose of life and the discovery and actualization of one’s true “I,” as Giussani repeats time and again.

What type of phenomenon is the religious experience? It is a phenomenon that concerns human reality and therefore cannot be studied as a geological or meteorological event. It involves the person. How then must we conduct our inquiry? Since we are dealing with something that occurs within me, that has to do with my conscience, my ‘I’ as a person, it is on myself that I must reflect; I must inquire into myself, engage in an *existential inquiry*. [...] external consultation must confirm, enrich, or contest the fruits of my personal reflection (RS, 5).

Aquinas said: *Anima est quodammodo omnia* (“the spirit of a man is in a certain way all things.”). The more that one is a person – human – the more he embraces and lives in the present instant all that has preceded and surrounds that instant.

The religious factor represents the nature of our ‘I’ in as much as it expresses itself in certain questions: ‘What is the ultimate meaning of existence?’ Or, from another point of view: ‘What does reality consist of and what is it made for?’ Thus, the religious sense lies within the reality of our self at the level of these questions: *it coincides with the radical engagement of the self with life, an involvement which exemplifies itself in these questions* (RS, 45).

So then [the inquirer] would have to conclude: There is something in the universe, in reality, that corresponds to this want, my need, and it does not coincide with anything that I can grasp, and I don’t know what it is (RS, 116).

Just as a sign demonstrates the thing of which it is, as a sign, so the world in its impact with the human being functions as a sign, ‘demonstrates’ something else, it demonstrates ‘God’ (RS, 116).

But Giussani’s enquiry into truth, unlike Heidegger’s, unfolds on a distinctly theological landscape. Giussani conceives the subject’s direction upon the object not in Heidegger’s vague sense of *Dasein*’s always being somehow “directed (*ausgerichtet*) and on-its-way,” but in the specific, Christian teleological sense of the soul’s journey (*percorso*) toward God (*Homo Viator*). This can be seen more clearly in his use of the Christian concept of pilgrimage, as also employed, for instance, by Dante in the *Divine Comedy* (“*nel mezzo del camin’ di nostra vita*”), rather than in Heidegger’s concept of the “world’s worlding.” For Giussani, *ontological*

*knowledge* – viz., knowledge of entities that, as Heidegger says, “thrust themselves to the fore in the state of ready-to-be-known” – is not enough to determine the direction of the subject’s gaze or movement. What is also needed is *ontological assurance*, “moral certainty,” of the object’s adequacy to be grasped and loved. Not all objects, in other words, are apt to be pursued by the knower for knowledge and apprehension. Judgement is a prerequisite for action, therefore, precisely because human flourishing depends on none other than the apprehension of the good.

The analogy with Heidegger, having been discussed now for several paragraphs, can only be carried so far. Teleology turns Giussani’s theory of knowledge into a theory of moral judgement, rendering it capable of assimilating theological content (*RS*, 23-33).<sup>68</sup> Notions of desire, destiny, and the heart are bound up with the anthropological claim that agents have a built-in goal-directedness, which, in the long run of enquiry, amounts to an instinctive and intellectual capacity for God (*capax Dei*).

**Augustinian Thomism** is the tendency in Giussani’s writings to frame the Aristotelian-Thomist doctrine of final causality according to St. Augustine’s notion of the heart’s restless desire for God.<sup>69</sup> The shift in Catholic thought from a pure and unadulterated Thomism to an Augustinian hybrid began to take root in the nineteenth century with the revival of patristic scholarship. In a published interview, Giussani identified Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), John Henry Newman (1801-1890), and Romano Guardini (1885-1968) – each of which fall within the nineteenth-century Augustinian revival – as having had a decisive influence on his thought (*MCL*, 29). Some of the same authors show up in Carlo Colombo’s account of the reception of Augustinian theology at Venegono Seminary, where from 1932-1942 Giussani

---

<sup>68</sup> Giussani departs from Heidegger on the crucial question of final ends to side with a long tradition in Western philosophy. Fergus Kerr points out the main areas of difference between Heidegger’s way of looking at causality and teleology and Thomas Aquinas’s: “[...] when Thomas argues from effect to cause (as for example in *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 2, a. 2) he takes it for granted that the world has a source and an end: that the world is ‘made.’ For Heidegger, in contrast, to maintain that the world cannot be described as the effect of something else, far from being an admission of the importance of human reason, is rather an acknowledgment of the inapplicability of the language of causality to the mystery of the world’s existence: when we look in vain for an explanation, in this case, the failure is not in our being unable to master the world but in our even trying to do so: ‘The human will to explain just does not reach the simpleness of the simple onefold of worlding.’” (*After Aquinas*, 85-89; here 89.).

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *Augustine, Confessions*, §1, 1-2.

underwent theological training for the priesthood: “The nineteenth century was a fruitful period of theological study, which is especially obvious when compared with the previous century. One of its characteristics, in fact, was undoubtedly the emergence of certain forms of theological reflection that carried new content and a new method of Christian thought, alongside the perdurance [*perdurare*] of the more classical approach to traditional theology: I allude to German theological thought of the first half of the century and especially to Möhler and Kuhn, to Newman, to Scheeben, and [...] [Carlo] Passaglia.”<sup>70</sup>

Pushing the bounds of *fin-de-siècle* Catholicism and its intolerance toward subjectivist philosophies, theologians following Augustine wished to explore the pastoral benefits of his self-reflective spiritual path to God. With due respect for Thomas (if not for Neo-Thomists themselves),<sup>71</sup> some theologians, such as Balthasar, felt his philosophy was “more open-ended and patient of innovatory interpretations and developments than the closed systems of theology *ad mentem sancti Thomae* suggest.”<sup>72</sup> In addition to injecting the dry and rationalistic character of nineteenth-century Scholasticism with the personalist appeal to the heart and desire, Augustine’s epistemology served technical ends as well, such as to solve the problem spawned by Kant concerning the grounds of objective truth in the knowing-subject:

---

<sup>70</sup> Carlo Colombo, “La metodologia teologica dal 1900 al 1950,” in *La Scuola Cattolica* (1952), 453-479; here 454-455 [My translation] ). Interestingly, in the same article, Colombo paints a sympathetic portrait of George Tyrrell, SJ, (1861-1909), portraying him as a spokesperson for “many theologians” who “had grown tired of a certain spiritual sterility of scholastic theology,” and the “anti-intellectualist spirit of a great amount of modern philosophy (459-460 [My translation] ).” Tyrrell had been expelled from the Society of Jesus in 1906 for his theologically unorthodox writings and subsequently denied a Catholic funeral. See: Ellen M. Leonard, *George Tyrrell and the Catholic Tradition* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982); Nicholas Sagovsky, ‘*On God’s Side: A Life of George Tyrrell*’ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

<sup>71</sup> Contrastingly, the Dominican exponent of Neo-Thomism, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964), was the subject of attack from fellow Dominican Yves Congar (1904-1995). Cf. Paul Philippe, O.P. to Yves Congar, O.P., 20 May 1946, in Yves Congar, *Journal d’un théologien, 1946-1956*, ed. Etienne Fouilloux (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 116, n. 256: “I find that you are attributing to Père Garrigou sentiments and actions that, to my knowledge, never existed ... . Truly, dear brother, you are being unjust.” (Quoted in Richard Peddicord, *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.* [South Bend, IN: St. Augustine’s Press, 2005], 1). Also, Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990) likely had Garrigou-Lagrange in mind when he wrote his scathing critique of Neo-Thomism in *Une école de théologie: le Saulchoir* (1942; Paris: Cerf, 1985). This essay was placed on the Index of Prohibited Books in 1942 at the insistence of Garrigou-Lagrange himself. (Quoted by Fergus Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 56).

<sup>72</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar’s “innovatory interpretations” of Thomas are discussed by Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians*, 136-137.

The content of scholastic universal ideas was obtained by abstraction from contingent sensible realities. Metaphysically considered, the universal ideas themselves were no more than intentional species. They were simply representations of contingent reality, spiritual modifications of a contingent mind. They were ontologically incapable of bringing the mind into contact with the unconditioned necessity of absolute metaphysical reality. Scholasticism could not overcome Kant's sceptical objections to the possibility of objective metaphysics and the subjectivism to which that scepticism led. The Christian philosopher could find a way out of this dilemma, however, through the Augustinian anthropology in which God's immediate presence to the mind justifies its apodictic certainty that there is objective truth.<sup>73</sup>

If Scholasticism seemed at the dawn of modernity incapable of leading the masses back to God, Augustine assured modern theologians of a conceptual framework suitable to new pastoral needs by placing desire and love at the centre of metaphysical reflection on God. Be that as it may, the concept of God's immediate presence to the mind, along with the attempt to open philosophy to a world of moral action in which God could freely reveal himself personally and existentially to the subject, put into question Thomas's approach to natural theology.<sup>74</sup> Traditional Thomists, backed by popes from Leo XIII (1878-1903) to Pius XIII (1939-1958), upheld Thomas's approach to natural theology, presupposing God's existence and casting light on the antecedent role of revelation in the act of faith.<sup>75</sup> In neither attempting nor even alluding to any kind of natural theology as envisaged by the 24 *Thomistic Theses* (1916), Giussani's approach was clearly a departure from Neo-Thomism.

In following Augustine, however, Giussani was far from alone. Another eminent disciple of the Augustinian school was Joseph Ratzinger (elected Pope

<sup>73</sup> Gerald McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, 115.

<sup>74</sup> Paul Misner, "Catholic anti-Modernism: the ecclesial setting," in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity*, edited by Darrell Jodock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 56-87.

<sup>75</sup> The most important documents are Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris*, Encyclical on the restoration of Christian Philosophy (Vatican City: 1849, numerous editions); especially §§ 19-24; Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Encyclical on the doctrines of the modernists (Vatican City: 1907, numerous editions); Pius X, *Motu Proprio Doctoris Angelici* (Vatican City: 1914, numerous editions); Pius XI, *Studiorum Ducem*, Encyclical on St. Thomas Aquinas (Vatican City: 1923, numerous editions); Pius XII, *Humani Generis*, Encyclical concerning some false opinions threatening to undermine the foundations of Catholic Doctrine (Vatican City: 1950, numerous editions). For an insightful commentary on Neo-Thomism see John F. X. Knasas, "Whither the Neo-Thomist Revival?," in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 3.4 (2000): 121-49. For more on "mandatory Thomism" see Gabriel Daly, "Theological and philosophical Modernism," in *Catholicism Contending with Modernity*, 88-112.

Benedict XVI in 2005). His approach to teaching the word God, identical to Giussani's, displays an aversion to logical demonstration. As Fergus Kerr points out, the new emphasis in natural theology is on anthropology: "[...] where a traditional Thomist would expect natural theology, metaphysical arguments for the existence of God, and so on, Ratzinger appeals simply and solely to anthropology and the history of religions. To understand what the word 'God' means we need to recall and analyze the sources of religious experience. [...] Demonstrating here that the solitary subject does not exist – always an exercise early in the neoscholastic philosophy courses – Ratzinger offers some interesting reflections, insisting that mind depends on language – not so common in neoscholastic philosophy. He is very much in tune, here, with philosophy at the time (1960s), with Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Wittgenstein, and so on, though never mentioning them."<sup>76</sup>

### Analysis

(i) Augustinian Thomism in Giussani forms around the topics of teleology and causality. The standard account of final causality holds that every agent acts for an end.<sup>77</sup> The central question concerns *why* the agent produces one effect rather than some other, and not *what* we must know to be able to attribute meaning, truth conditions, and goal-directedness to efficient action itself. The argument, briefly, is induced from observation of both the agent and the caused effect. *From the side of the agent*, observation suggests that a caused effect, which is *p* and not *q* (i.e., determinately *this* and not *that*, not vague or indefinite) is the determinate end of an agent's focussed intention and action. The focus is exhibited in the harnessing and sublimation of an agent's energies under the preponderance of an effect to be produced. Analogously, Jesus says: "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks (Lk. 6:45)." It follows, *from the*

<sup>76</sup> Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians*, 191.

<sup>77</sup> This section is indebted to Norris Clarke for his lucid account of Thomist teleology in "The Extrinsic Causes of Being and Becoming: The Final Cause," in *The One and the Many* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 199-211. Cf. George Klubertanz, "St. Thomas' Treatment of the Axiom, *Omne agens agit propter finem*," in *An Etienne Gilson Tribute*, ed. C. O'Neill (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1959), 107-117. For a more contemporary Thomist perspective, more in line with philosophy of language, see Alasdair MacIntyre, "Reasons for action," in *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishers, 1999), 53-61.

*agent's action to the determinate effect*, that the agent, before or at the moment of action, is executing his plan – an intention which is an interior determination or pre-ordination toward a determinate mode, *p* and not *q*. Differently put, the effect *p* reflects “the mind” of the agent. Analogously, Jesus says: “You will know them by their fruits (Matt. 7:16).”

There are three related aspects to final causality, and a corollary. 1. Final causality directs the agent's energies toward a goal. It does not supply the energy *per se*. 2. The end sought for keeps the agent's attention focussed, grounding a determinate course of action in a sufficient reason. Sufficiency, broadly speaking, is satisfied by the requisite desire of the agent. The goal, then, is also a good insofar as it is sought for. 3. *Why* the agent does something can be distinguished from *what* the agent does. The latter, the immediate goal sought for (*finis operis*), is often subordinated to the former, the personal reasons motivating the agent's activity toward the goal sought. *Corollary*: The determinate ends of human agency, in particular, presuppose the workings of a specific kind of intelligence or thoughtfulness, different in important respects from that exhibited in the goal-directed activities of dolphins and chimpanzees and the *Sphex* wasp. As Alasdair MacIntyre points out: “[...] when a species, such as our own, is able through the use of language to become reflective about its reasons, it is not only the having of reasons that is now on occasion causally effective in guiding behaviour, but the having of reasons for taking this set of considerations rather than to be in this particular situation [as] genuinely reason-affording that is causally effective.”<sup>78</sup>

Thomas, who also reasons from effect to cause, similarly determinates that action resides in some designing intelligence, either the immediate agent itself, if

---

<sup>78</sup> Clarke points out that the argument from final causality, which requires intelligence as ultimate cause, is also contested by various philosophers. The dispute concerns a lack of logical cogency commanded by other metaphysical arguments, owing to its origins in reflective analysis on the role of intelligence in nature (*The One and the Many*, 204-205). The alternative seems to stress a language-based anthropology to the point of concluding, as John MacDowell does, that “Human beings are born mere animals, and they are transformed into thinkers and intentional agents in the course of coming to maturity” (*Mind and World*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994, Lecture VI, p. 115). MacIntyre, in line with Clarke, and opposing MacDowell, argues that it is because of a certain kind of intelligence exhibited in the practical reasoning of human beings, i.e., the ability to discern and choose between equal goods, that “some of the prelinguistic conditions necessary for human rationality ... are satisfied” (*Dependent Rational Animas*, 59-60).

free, or else the first cause/God.<sup>79</sup> Giussani's reasoning, however, takes a distinctly Neo-Platonic/Augustinian turn, delving inwardly, with the understanding that God, the intelligent planning cause, has constructed human nature so that it has an innate natural tendency to recognize the Good through self-reflection and to desire it. This self-reflexive turn and its corresponding themes – the restless heart, Plotinian ascent, *delectatio victrix*, free will, the problem of sin, and so on – gives a distinctly Augustinian bent to Giussani's theology. Under the preponderance of Augustine's influence, Giussani's teleology presupposes a self-love that finds its truest expression in the love of God. On the whole, Thomism remains only in the background of his epistemology.

Following Augustine, Giussani concludes the explication of his method (his so-called "Third Premise of the Religious Sense"), reasoning from effect to cause, only to say more explicitly and again *a posteriori* that the heart is the dynamic principle of human consciousness. It is the heart that directs the will to seek unlimited truth and to rest in an unlimited good:

That something moves from one position to a different one means that 'something else' makes this passage possible. To say that 'a person becomes' or 'life passes' implies the existence of something else. Otherwise, the statement would be a self-negating affirmation, because by not admitting that there is a hidden factor determining the passage, you end up having to concede – as has already been said – that  $A$  and  $A_1$  are identical. And this, in turn, would negate the formula, which is a description of our experience in action (*RS*, 58).

Man is, in fact, moved solely by love and affection. It is primarily *love of ourselves as destiny*, the affection of our own *destiny* that can convince us to undertake this work to become habitually detached from our own opinions and our imaginations [...], so that all of our cognitive energy will be focussed upon a search for the truth of the object, no matter what it should be. This love is the ultimate inner movement, the supreme emotion that persuades us to seek true virtue (*RS*, 33).

The idea of the Good is implanted by God in his human creatures along with the desire for self-flourishing and self-reflective intelligence. The Good is desirable – an object to be possessed by the agent as somehow perfective of it – through an

---

<sup>79</sup> E.g., *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 2, a. 2.

appetitive nature or natural tendency for fulfilment infused deeply within the nature of the human person. Thus, desire for the Good, as desire for Truth, is love.

(ii) In Giussani's terminology, the dialectic of desire and fulfilment is the "inner countenance" of the human person – "a 'heart,' as the bible would say (*RS*, 9)" – even though at times unconscious, because it is the "interior stamp" of the "I." The heart, as "interior stamp," is the principle of personal identity and a common humanity that exhibits itself externally and can be recognized in the pursuit of common goals: truth, beauty, goodness, and so on. Initially, one is aware only that all human movement is directed by the desire for fulfilment (*RS*, 141). On closer self-reflection, one begins to realize that desire is inexhaustible, such that it can only be fulfilled by an Infinite being. "The inability of the answer to satisfy the constitutive needs of our self is something structural; in other words, it is so inherent to our nature that it represents the very character of our being (*RS*, 49)." Attraction to the Good turns out to be inexhaustible; that is, until it finds its satisfaction in God, of which all other goods, material and spiritual, are aspects. Consciousness, Giussani writes, "is aware that it is destined to a task, and this awareness is the encounter between God and the individual (*JTE*, 90)." When the soul encounters some phenomenon that reflects the divine essence, it is sent on something of a Plotinian journey, ascending ever higher to its proper object of contemplation, the divine essence itself: "this reality into which we collide unleashes a word, a 'logos' which sends you further, calls you on to another, beyond itself, further up (*RS*, 109)." In the long run of inquiry, one may proceed from the self-awareness of infinite desire for infinite fulfilment, through the "hypothesis of revelation," to belief in God as the first and final cause (*RS*, 139 ff.).

(iii) For Giussani, the practice of verification turns out to be an ascetical-epistemological endeavour to cultivate a "state of soul" or habit of thought that consciously judges whether the goods which source our happiness (among the beliefs and actions of everyday life) are adequate to the needs of the heart-in-relation-to-destiny. Something that seems good, is even believed to be good, may turn out not to be good when tested against the heart and destiny. To cultivate a habit of



discernment about goods requires transcending the common mentality, ideology, and preconceptions in order to ask whether  $x$ , which displays the class characters of happiness, fulfills the innate needs of the heart, which are infinite. Only if  $x$  passes this test may it be called a fit object of love; for  $x$  is not good if in grasping it one feels bad, nor is it enough if in loving it one is left wanting.

(iv) Giussani's phenomenological ontology presupposes an intuitive awareness of the difference between higher and lower, better and worse, true and false. It also presupposes an innate awareness of standard moral behaviour, such that certain actions which take one across the bounds of what one considers to be "normal" strike one with compunction. What counts as "normal," Giussani insists, is "inscribed in the law of the heart (*RS*, 107)."<sup>80</sup> The attribution of "goodness" to some object on the basis of what makes one truly happy (the heart's needs) is a sufficient reason for deciding and acting insofar as the heart is given to each one by nature for the achievement of true satisfaction, a fuller expression of humanity in God. "The source of our being places within us the vibration of good and the suggestion, the remorse of evil. There is a voice within us (*RS*, 107)." The heart is a repository of truth, a "critical principle," against which the presentment of objects themselves is tested for their aptness to human flourishing. The good resides in its depths, as "an idea [...] we find within ourselves which allows us to say of someone, 'he is good' (*RS*, 40)." As Giussani says elsewhere, the Good, which gives direction and content to man's projects and the completion of the "I," is "dictated" by the "ideal image that stimulates [man] from within (*RS*, 9)." Or elsewhere, "The more a value is vital and elementary in its importance – destiny, affection, common life – the more our nature gives to each of us the intelligence to know and judge it. The centre of the problem [of morality] is really a proper position of the heart, a correct attitude, a feeling in its place, a morality (*RS*, 30)."

---

<sup>80</sup> Giussani cites *Romans* 2:15.

(v) A problem arises – informed by the Catholic doctrine of original sin<sup>81</sup> – insofar as human beings are fallen and, thus, fallible creatures. *First*, they are apt to misattribute and misidentify what is truly good insofar as they fail to distinguish between appearance and reality. *Second*, even though human beings, by a spontaneous impulse, tend to their flourishing, and while they are endowed with the capacity to test the adequacy (*correspondence*) of goods in relation to the infinite needs of the heart, human effort requires divine grace to adhere to truth or moral certainty. In Giussani's words:

There is a hiatus, an abyss, a void between the intuition of truth, of being – given by reason – and the will, a dissociation between reason, the perception of being, and will, which is affectivity, that is to say, the energy of adhesion to being (Christianity would point out in this experience a wound produced by 'original sin'). Because of this, one sees the reasons, but still does not move, that is to say lacks the energy to be coherent. ... Coherence is the energy with which man takes hold of himself and 'fastens on' to what reason lets him see. On the contrary, a break occurs between reason and affectivity, between reason and will (*RS*, 129).<sup>82</sup>

So while the agent is endowed with the capacity to intuit and perceive the noxious effects of clinging to what is finite or morally evil, human conduct displays that such recognition is not enough to render the agent's actions coherent with proper moral ends. The defect, to be clear, is not in the heart *per se*, insofar as it is oriented to the Good and God, but in the intellect's darkened understanding and the will's weakened ability of adhesion to the true.<sup>83</sup> For this reason, human beings must be educated to use the heart and continually reminded that therein lies their true identity, the basis of a common humanity.

---

<sup>81</sup> Giussani's interest in doctrinal differences between Catholics and Protestants, and his preference for the writings of Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), of Tübingen, brought him into contact with that author's doctrinal survey of original sin. For Möhler's views on original sin see his *Symbolik*, translated by James Robertson (London: Gibbins and Co, Ltd.), 61. For a commentary see John Fitzer, *Moehler [sic.] and Bauer in Controversy, 1832-38: Romantic-Idealist Assessment of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation* (Tallahassee, FL: American Academy of Religion, 1974), 34-44.

<sup>82</sup> Thomas is more thorough in listing the effects of original sin. See: *Lib* i. q. 85, art iii.

<sup>83</sup> Giussani's stance on the effects of original sin are contrary, for instance, to those of the *Solid Declaration* (1577) in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church*, tr. Theodore G. Tappert et al. (Philadelphia, 1959): "Original sin [...] replaces the lost image of God in man with a deep [...] and inexpressible corruption of his entire nature in all its powers [...]."

*Non-Philosophical Romanticism* refers to the tendency in Giussani's correspondence writings to opt for intuition over ordinary rationality, to understand the world and its significance in the style of the poets and other creative geniuses, rather than through the analytical language of philosophers or logicians (*RS*, 14). Announcing this kind of philosophical programme, Giussani writes: "The truly interesting question for man is neither logic, a fascinating game, nor demonstration, an inviting curiosity. Rather, the intriguing problem for man is how to adhere to reality, to become aware of reality. This is a matter of being compelled by reality, not one of logical consistency. [...] Logic, coherence, demonstration are no more than instruments of reasonableness at the service of a greater hand, the more ample 'heart,' that puts them to use." In a similar vein, he quotes from *Hamlet*: " 'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt in your philosophy' (*RS*, 51)." <sup>84</sup>

Non-Philosophical Romanticism registers both in terms of the rhetoric and content of Giussani's argument. With respect to the former, namely *pathos*, Giussani draws on symbolism and allegory to enliven the analytic statements of dogmatic and moral theology, and, most of all, to stir the "intelligent," "dramatic," and "inevitable emotions" of his young interlocutors to a conscious awareness of their desire for the Infinite (*RS*, 46). In this endeavour, Giussani is following in the steps of a former teacher, Giovanni Colombo (1902-1992), whose philosophy of religious education promoted the use of literature as a propaedeutic to systematic theology and catechesis.<sup>85</sup> With respect to the latter, Giussani traces the recurrence of Romantic leitmotifs (desire, melancholy, self-discovery and self-expression) through a variety of the Romantic poets (e.g., Giacomo Leopardi [1798-1837], Giovanni Pascoli [1855-1912], Rainer Maria Rilke [1875-1926]), and in so doing means to support and universalize one of the basic anthropological claims of his theological reflection: "Only the existence of mystery suits the structure of the human person, with its

<sup>84</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 1, sc. 5, lines 166-7.

<sup>85</sup> Colombo established a rapport between literature and theology through the following categories: Literature as the framework of catechesis (*Letteratura come ornata nella catechesi*), Literature as clarifier of catechesis (*Letteratura come clarificatore nella catechesi*), Literature as allegory in catechesis (*Letteratura come allegoria nella catechesi*), Literature as alleviation in catechesis (*Letteratura come sollievo nella catechesi*), and Literature as emotion in catechesis (*La letteratura come emozione nella catechesi*). See: "La letteratura come sussidio alla catechesi," in *La Scuola Cattolica* (1933): 313-330.

mendacity, insatiable begging, and what corresponds to him is neither he himself nor something he gives to himself, measures, or possesses (*RS*, 57).”

### Analysis

(i) Under the aegis of “Non-Philosophical” Romanticism, the notion of *capax Dei* is presented as a case of the contingent knower’s heightened awareness of self and universe. Such a view holds that theological propositions are derived from within as well as from without, but that in both cases, consciousness is the necessary precondition both of knowing and of certainty (viz., as in the intuitive exclusion of error). Concerning the knowledge of God from within, Giussani writes: “to be conscious of oneself right to the *core* is to perceive, at the *depths of the self*, an Other. (*RS*, 106, my emphasis).” Concerning the knowledge of God from without, Giussani writes: “Kant once confessed that the moment in which he doubted his *Critique of Pure Reason* – the book that denied that one can move from reality on to another presence – was when he went out from his house, and lifting up his head, gazed at the starry sky (*RS*, 103).” The flash of insight with which Kant was struck not only casts doubt on his previous views but demonstrates that another presence, presumably God’s, can be intuited from the starry sky, Giussani believes.

Giussani also observes that the knowledge of God is contingent on the relation of consciousness to the other-as-infinite-fulfilment. To become gradually aware of that which lies at the depths of one’s being (in Augustine’s sense) coheres with authentic self-discovery; to externalize that presence in belief and practice (in St. Paul’s sense) coheres with self-expression. Giussani presents the epistemological problem of fulfilment as a case of existential groping for the authenticity of the “I,” which results, after serious self-examination, in the self-liberating realization that one’s infinite needs are most adequately met in an Other. The narrative at these points often turns to the disproportion between our infinite needs and the limitedness of the objects of this world as means to their fulfilment. For Giussani, Leopardi’s impassioned (though ultimately failed) attempt to conquer the love of his life exemplifies best the “sublime sense of the soul,” which is the ardour that drives us to

know and to love to the very end.<sup>86</sup> The condition of Leopardi's pursuit, when returned by Giussani to the realm of theological reflection on desire, picks up on Augustine's theme of the restless heart, with the emphasis that love for the fleeting objects of this world is inordinate, as exemplified in Leopardi's finitude, while care for the genuine needs of one's life, exhibited in the universal desire for truth, justice, happiness, and beauty, anticipates the fullness that lies beyond (*RS*, 116).

(ii) The resonance with Romantic expressivism, beyond the category of desire and fulfilment, strengthens as the epistemology of correspondence is likened repeatedly to the prophetic genius of the poet or artist to perceive the truth about humanity and about its destiny. Giussani speaks of the knower as an artist who, through signs, proceeds to the perception of the true (*RS*, 19), and he attributes this capacity to natural endowment, the possession of which exalts an otherwise prosaic, earth-bound, and superficial approach to reality: "Here we are speaking of the intuition, which, in every period of history, the more intelligent human spirits have had. It is an intuition of this mysterious presence, which endows the instant, the 'I' with substance (solidity, density, foundation) (*RS*, 105)." Authenticity is often characterised in this context as the measure of the contingent knower's heightened level of consciousness, the depth of his engagement with reality, the seriousness with which he lives life: "The mark of great souls and persons who are truly alive is an eagerness for this search, carried out through their commitment to the reality of their existence (*RS*, 109)." And authenticity recurs to the journey inward, to the seat of the authentic "I," to the heart, to the criterion of a correspondence between the true self and the object of desire: asking "Who am I?" and "What does this object mean to me, to the fullness of my humanity, to the freedom and authenticity according to which I wish to live?" Precisely because correspondence is a question of verifying objects against the heart, it presupposes self-knowledge and, hence, the antecedent self-discovery prompted by questions of meaning and identity. The greater and more frequent the correspondence, the greater and more ample the results for transcendence: "The more one lives this level of consciousness in his relationship

---

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Giussani's commentary on Leopardi's poem *Sopra il ritratto di una bella donna scolpito nel monumento sepolcrale della medesima* in the article "Giacomo Leopardi al culmine del suo genio profetico," in *ML*, 10-11.

with things, the more intense the impact with reality, and the more one begins to know the mystery (*RS*, 109).” Since nature has endowed the contingent knower with the interpretive ability to perceive the truth, Giussani is able to frame the moral imperative of adhering to the real as the responsible, free, and expressive act of self-discovery and to anchor the results of such adherence in the moral certainty that comes with being in full possession of the self.

(iii) Moral certainty as regards the self is now a case of following the voice of nature within. Whereas with Augustine the heart is inclined to God by means of its very weight,<sup>87</sup> now, under the aegis of Romanticism, teleology is presented as the case of following the inner voice, a prime original intuition, with which nature has endowed us. “There is a voice within us,” says Giussani, “the vibration of good and the suggestion, the remorse of evil,” as Giovanni Pascoli also confirms, Giussani shows, in his poem “There is a voice in my life (*RS*, 107).” Giussani calls this phenomenological ontology “elementary experience;” he roots it primordially in the heart, and describes it as “immanent in our nature, the complex of ‘needs’ and ‘evidences’ that our mother gave us at birth (*RS*, 8).” Giussani’s epistemology is based on understanding primordial feelings or intuitions that well up from the depths in the “impact with the real.” As he puts it: “[...] it would not be human, that is to say, reasonable, to take our experience at face value, to limit it to just the crest of the wave, without going down to the core of its motion (*RS*, 108).” In addition to resembling the Platonic doctrine that real ideas ontologically pre-exist in the minds into which they enter, Giussani’s terminology confers on his theology a naturalist patina. The intimation of naturalism is mitigated only by the addition of theistic affirmations: “Now to state this criterion is inherent within us is not to argue we alone provide it. Rather, it is to assert that it is drawn from our nature, it is given to us by our very nature (where the word nature evidently implies the word God, a clue to the ultimate origins of our ‘I’). (*RS*, 7)”

The prospect of self-discovery would be impossible, Giussani believes, without recognition of the moral importance of the emotions. While the idea of God as self-subsistent being, first cause, and sustainer of the universe can be deduced

---

<sup>87</sup> Cf. “My weight is my love; it takes me wherever I may go.” (Augustine, *Confessions*, § 13.9.10).

from his effects, as Thomas would maintain, for Giussani, the idea of God flows from the contingent knower's attraction to beauty and the capacity of nature to arrest and possess the mind. The hermeneutical relation between knower-as-interpreter and creation-as-referrant is proleptic of theological claims to come: "A true seeker's disposition is laden with a prior evidence and an awe: the wonder of the presence attracts me, and that is how the search within me breaks out (*RS*, 102)."<sup>88</sup> From wonder and the "attraction of harmonious beauty" (e.g., "the starry sky") the knower moves to self-expression (i.e., "the search within me breaks out") and comes upon the intuition at his very depths that he is made by an Other ("*I am you-who-make-me*").

This connects with another leading tendency found in Giussani's concept of friendship, viz., to affirm corporeality rather than to transcend it.<sup>89</sup> In earnest, Giussani expands the idea of reason with the intuitive power of knowing self, which could reach to mystical heights. He never relinquishes his supreme allegiance to the object and he never promotes a private religion. Giussani felt the need to distinguish between affectivity (on the one hand) and sentimentalism (on the other) to preserve the human act of faith from being grounded excessively in the emotions. Emotionalism, as distinct from the subject's loving response to reality, was thought to compromise the objectivity of the fact of Christ and the givenness of revelation.

### OBSERVATIONS

The claim that pre-linguistic reactions of respect and aversion to the objects of the world leads to theological propositions about God, as Giussani believes, has important implications for Revelation-Tradition and theological anthropology. The problem turns on the epistemological priority of the heart in matters of doubt and belief, as seen in Giussani's method of turning propositions into hypotheses and testing them for truth against the heart. The neo-Platonic notion that a real idea ontologically pre-exists in the hearts into which it enters is the philosophical basis of

---

<sup>88</sup> The disposition to reverence, essential in Giussani's conception of religion, begins with the affirmation and development of attraction. Giussani cites an episode from Kant's life: *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1898), 260; cf. *RS* 103.

<sup>89</sup> See Robert Di Pede, "Luigi Giussani on the Notion of Christian Friendship," in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 14.1 (2011): 91-121.

Giussani's claim of an innate religious desire which is met by and completed through the event of God's self-revelation. Thus, Giussani seems to formulate the argument for tradition in contradictory terms.

### ***Revelation***

(i) Giussani's account of revelation must accommodate the axiom that God has endowed his human creatures with the instinctual aptitude for "religious experience" (cf. *RS*, 143 ff). He describes the journey to the proposition that God exists as follows:

The human being becomes aware of himself as 'I,' recovers this original awe with a depth that establishes the measure, the stature of his identity. At this moment, if I am attentive, that is, if I am mature, then I cannot deny that the greatest and most profound evidence is that I do not make myself [...] I am "given." Here we are speaking of an intuition, which, in every period of history, the more intelligent human spirits have had. [...] When I examine myself and notice that I am not making myself by myself, then I [...] turn to the Thing that makes me, to the source that causes me to be in this instant, and I can only address it using the word *you*. [...] To be conscious to oneself right to the core is to perceive, at the depths of the self, an Other. [...] All human actions, therefore, inasmuch as they aim toward peace and joy, seek God, the exhaustive substance of our lives. [...] The mark of great souls and persons who are truly alive is an eagerness for this search, carried out through their commitment to the reality of their existence (*RS*, 109).

Giussani goes even further, describing the human body as genetically constituted to anticipate religious faith. Commenting on the Incarnation in Luke 1:34-7, he speaks of God's taking on of human flesh as evidence of the structural compatibility of the human person to Divine manifestation (*RS*, 144). Furthermore, of man's religious core, Giussani writes: "we are speaking of that manner of going forth [into the world] religiously, a bit mechanically, whereby the aura, the natural religious sentiment, which in some way, every person maintains by nature, even beneath the ashes of this word, is hidden away and is still able to hide (*IPO*, 134)." On this basis, he is able to maintain that "faith is born from the recollection of an exceptional presence." That "recollection," intimating Plato's pre-existing forms, concerns God's hidden presence in the soul. Indeed, recollection is the central feature of Giussani's account



of faith: both in arriving with certitude at the proposition that God exists and in being able to give it assent.

The possibility of religious experience lies in the presuppositions Giussani makes about subjects and objects in his theory of recollection. Similarly, for Romano Guardini (one of Giussani's foremost influences), "religious experience is no mere state of excitation; it is not a feeling without an object, nor is it a subjective function. It is a true state of apprehension, awareness, and certitude; in it something that is 'given' and the person who has the experience knows a definite object just as a man who sees knows an object under the light. The object is real."<sup>90</sup> For Giussani, the encounter presupposes these same features as outlined in Guardini's account of religious experience: viz., that each term in its otherness is endowed with a particular identity, nature, and inclination that combines into a single reality. All subjects, primitively motivated by the need of fulfilment, have the capacity for "religious experience." Beyond the capacity, all that is required is the exceptionality of a presence. The presence may be general and universal, such as in the subject's impact with the arresting beauty of the sea,<sup>91</sup> or specific and particular, such as in the "hypothesis" of the God-made-man or the calling to a vocation like the priesthood. Giussani associates the former with poets, artists, and musicians, and the latter, paradigmatically, with the encounter of John and Andrew with Jesus.<sup>92</sup>

The presence is religious not only by giving itself in order to be known, but in so doing, by speaking to the subject's need of fulfilment. Thus, the exceptionality of the encounter is measured by what the subject deems to be essential to his survival and his flourishing. This relation can be felt in different ways, as pointed out by Guardini: viz., "as creative, formative, permeating, and dominant; as filling, inspiring, fructifying, purifying, making blessed, as obligation, transformation, and promise; as anger, threat, judgement, punishment, absorption, annihilation – but always in such a manner that it reveals a significance of its own that lends a positive

---

<sup>90</sup> Guardini, *Freedom, Grace, Destiny*, 54.

<sup>91</sup> Luigi Giussani in a letter to Angelo Majò, September 24, 1946: "... For you are like the sea: / vast and ancient, / whose voice speaks mysterious and profound thoughts, / which you hear and understand, but are unable to rehearse back to yourself / in clear and defined words [...]" (My translation)

<sup>92</sup> Cf. John 1: 35-40.

value to what might have appeared negative.”<sup>93</sup> The criterion by which to measure the meaningfulness of the encounter is not chosen, but given (by God). Thus, Giussani speaks of the needs and evidences of the heart as having a divine origin. The discovery of the criteria and their fulfilment, then, lead to the one who inscribed them onto the heart.

The rightness – i.e., the “exceptionality” – of the encounter, having the quality of “moral certainty,” warrants the subject’s allegiance to God. The ontological nature of this certainty is positive, for it supplies what has hitherto been absent in the subject’s pursuit of fulfillment. What is more, the presence, as God, is recognized by the subject as the particular something of which he was fundamentally in need. With the fulfilment of that absence having been achieved, the quest of the subject draws to a close. The quest would only continue, in other words, if the presence showed up as inept and ineffectual before the ideal of fulfilment.

(ii) What role, then, does the emphasis on encounter leave to revelation?

Giussani says: “[...] revelation means a possibly real fact, an historical event, which the human person may or may not recognize. In fact, neither Judas, nor the majority of those who saw it, recognized it (*RS*, 143).” Revelation is significant because it is God’s answer to humanity’s cry for purpose and meaning: “At the extremity of life’s experience, at the edge of this passionate hard-won consciousness of existence, in spite of man himself, this cry of the truest humanity breaks out as an entreaty, a begging. And then emerges the great hypothesis ... This is the exceptional hypothesis, revelation in a strict sense of the word: that the mystery that reveals itself through a factor of history with which, as in the case of Christianity, it identifies itself (*RS* 143).” Thus, if the purpose and meaning of life can be accessed through an experience in advance of learning the truth-claims of revelation, Giussani would seem to conclude that religious faith need not depend so heavily on our teachers in faith.

(iii) What effect does emphasising “comprehension” and “conscious recollection” on the “exceptionality of a presence” have on revelation as a communicative act?

---

<sup>93</sup> Guardini, *Freedom, Grace, Destiny*, 54.

The sense seems to imply that human beings and their activities are to be understood in terms of consciousness. Reactions to material signs, such as Scripture and tradition, are, on this account, attended by deliberation and reflection. To presume otherwise would be to diminish the standard of acting “reasonably” as self-conscious rational beings. As a result, revelation is something that is judged and appropriated with moral certainty, not primarily as an axiom that is learned unreflectively through the longstanding custom of the community, but through experience and testing. How one is educated to interpret signs seems to diminish in importance in comparison with the construction that one is already endowed with “needs and evidences” and self-consciousness in order to be able to reflect on what “corresponds.”<sup>94</sup> Giussani’s unwitting indebtedness to Descartes and Kant cannot be overlooked here, much as he himself would be dismayed to find it. Indeed, “elementary experience” does not so much include revelation or tradition within its own structure, but stands in advance of and above revelation and tradition as the critical and primordial principle of metaphysical verification accessed through self-conscious reflection.<sup>95</sup>

(iv) There is something odd in saying “We seek, and behold: God is there to be sought,” when surely it is because God *is*, that we seek. Thomas Aquinas would likely have had a hard time imagining how a theologically-generated doctrine, such as the existence of a transcendent being or God as self subsistent being, could be discovered in purely metaphysical reflection, as Giussani’s epistemology maintains.<sup>96</sup> Giussani, however, is not alone among twentieth-century Catholic

---

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein*, 110 ff.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. “[...] a correspondence with the object to self-consciousness, the consciousness we have of ourselves, i.e., the awareness of those needs and exigencies that constitute the heart, which constitute the person, without which we would be nothing!” *RE*, 29. (My translation.)

<sup>96</sup> Cf. “But faith is twofold, according to a twofold hearing and a twofold speaking. For ‘faith cometh by hearing,’ as is said in Romans (10:17). Now, there is an external speaking, by which God speaks to us through preachers, and an interior speaking, by which He speaks to us through an internal inspiration. This internal inspiration is called a kind of speaking in view of its likeness to external speaking. For, as in external speaking we present to the hearer not the thing itself which we want to make known but a sign of that thing, that is to say, a word which expresses some meaning; so in internal inspiration, it is not His essence which God presents to view, but some sign of His essence, which is some spiritual likeness of his wisdom. Faith arises in the hearts of the faithful from both kinds of hearing. By interior hearing it arose in those who first received faith and taught it, as in the Apostles and Prophets. Hence, in Psalms (84:9) we read: ‘I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me.’ But faith arises in the hearts of the rest of the faithful, who receive knowledge of the faith through other men, by the second kind of hearing. Adam, however, had faith, and as one who first

thinkers to base a great deal of moral theology on the presupposition of an *a prioristic* religious core. Etienne Gilson, Fergus Kerr points out, had once recommended that Christian philosophy penetrate beyond the abstruse philosophical theses on which it had relied for centuries to the underlying “deep religious life and secret fervour of a soul in search of God.”<sup>97</sup>

The problem with soul-searching teleology lies in the contentious claim that God can be recognized before a language of signs is imparted. Such claims must defend themselves not only against Thomas, but against anthropologies based on linguistic dependency, from the later Wittgenstein through cognitive psychology to field teleology.<sup>98</sup> Thomas explicitly and consistently maintains that the notion of God as transcendent self-subsisting being presupposes God’s primitive self-revelation: “This sublime truth Moses was taught by our Lord.”<sup>99</sup> According to Fergus Kerr, Gilson concludes his long preamble concerning God as Pure Act of Being in *The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy* without demonstrating explicitly the significant fact that “it took God’s self-revelation to Moses to get the thought going in the first place that God is the ‘to be’ which we cannot know.”<sup>100</sup> Gilson’s oblique *a priorism*, Kerr finds, is sealed with his explicit references to a “deep religious life and secret fervour of a soul in search of God.” What Gilson fails to point out is that God’s self-revelation as Pure Act of Being, through the statement “I AM WHO AM” (*Exod.* 1:13-14), tells a different story concerning the genealogy of theologically-generated propositions than the claim that God may be known by reflecting on the

---

learned it from God. Therefore, he should have had faith through interior speaking.” (Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*, q. 18, art. 3).

<sup>97</sup> Kerr, *After Aquinas*, 85.

<sup>98</sup> For a thorough and widely discussed commentary on the contentiousness of the claim of an innate religious core see George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1984); and “Discovering Thomas: The Classic Statement of Christian Theism,” in *Una Sancta* 24 (1967), 48 ff. See also Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein* (1986; London: SPCK, 1997); Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago, IL: Open Court Publishers, 1999), and Mark Okrent, *Rational Animals: The Teleological Roots of Intentionality* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007).

<sup>99</sup> “This sublime truth Moses was taught by our Lord. When Moses asked our Lord: ‘If the children of Israel say to me: What is His name? What shall I say to them?’ The Lord replies: ‘I AM WHO AM ... thou shalt say to the children of Israel: HE WHO IS hath sent me to you’ (*Exod.* 3:13-14). By this our Lord showed that His own proper name is HE WHO IS. Now names have been devised to signify the natures or essences of things. It remains, then, that the divine being (*esse*) is God’s essence or nature.” (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, 1, 22, 10).

<sup>100</sup> Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein*, 84.

secret depths of the soul. The alternative narrative, to which Kerr gestures but Gilson omits, resorts to the fact that Moses heard the voice of God. By extension, what we are able to say about God derives from what we are taught. Language is inescapable. To imply that the notion of a transcendent being is intuitively perceptible is not necessarily incorrect as it is conjectural. To represent theory as fact is of course problematic.

A tension begins to emerge in Giussani's treatment of Revelation-Tradition between objectivity, of the kind promoted in Giussani's Heideggerian tendency to return to the things themselves, and subjectivity, of the kind promoted in his Non-Philosophical Romantic tendency to accord moral importance to the emotions. Analogously, the tension is between a prelinguistic *capax Dei*, of the kind derived from the notion of a restless heart in search of its unlimited rest in God, and of a linguistically-dependant *capax Dei*, of the kind derived from the notion that cognitive reflection on the identity of God requires training in a language of signs by which to recognize God.

### ***Intuitions***

The account of tradition is equivocal and inconsistent, it would seem, owing to two competing tendencies in the account of intuitions. The most problematic of the accounts is the second, which replicates the characteristics of Cartesian-Kantian *a priorism*.

(i) In his early writings (*imprimatur* and *nihil obstat* 1960), addressing the relationship of CL to the hierarchy of the Church, Giussani correctly ascribes importance to the longstanding customs of the community: "Any version of the Christian experience, no matter how personal, must at least imply [an] encounter with the community and reference to authority (JTE, 105)." On this account, intuitions are formed in specific contexts and can be taken as a reliable basis for responsible deciding and acting in daily life without self-conscious appropriation, even though the possibility of their interruption by unexpected events always exists. As Giussani writes:

Our encounter with a vital Christian community [...] brings us tidings that spring from a life lived through the centuries, through *tradition*. Each of us emerges from a stream that is born of this human and Christian solidarity. Thus, to love the community and the encounter that has generated it means to love this tradition of which we are born, to acknowledge this age-old reality that makes possible the Christian existence within us (*JTE*, 95).

A vestige of this emphasis remains in *The Trilogy* where tradition is the formative influence into which subjects are born and outside of which they cannot be conceived (*RS*, 37ff., *OCC*, 20). Giussani teaches his interlocutors to appropriate the culture and tradition into which they are born as a matter of common sense judgement, rather than through rigorous testing, discouraging scepticism or doubt in their regard. For Giussani, it would be folly, for instance, for a Buddhist arbitrarily to abandon his tradition in pursuit of another: “the suggestion that we follow the religion of our own tradition remains a basic unpretentious directive. In this sense then, all religions are ‘true.’ Man’s only duty is to be serious in adhering to them (*OCC*, 20).” Similarly, it would be insufferable either for a child arbitrarily to call into question her mother’s love for her (*RS*, 14), or for a philosopher to doubt the existence of the United States of America simply on the basis of not having been there in person (*RS*, 15ff.). The thrust of each of these examples highlights the unreflective aspect of intuitions, and shows that the spontaneous appropriation of tradition through all kinds of activities is a respectable mode of behaviour: “[the regard for tradition] requires keenness – not destruction, not intelligence, not pettiness, not a complaint for what is not found, but joy at what is found, and a ready openness to acknowledge the correspondence (*JTE*, 138).”

(ii) The continual recurrence to the theme of correspondence suggests that the appropriation of tradition is a conscious act of judgement relying on the recollection of a priori criteria. While tradition, for Giussani, is a repository of past wisdom, correspondence requires that its relevance to the present and the future be a conscious determination of its moral standing *en face* of the human problem. Quite apart from the authority given to tradition through a longstanding custom of the community, it is something that acquires moral force to the extent that it has been judged as a “working hypothesis.” Understanding tradition means applying it to the

most important questions of life. Judging its pragmatic purport vis-à-vis the human problem is the preferred mode of loyalty to unreflective – blind – following. The longstanding customs of the community take hold of our interpretations only after they have been judged objectively/essentially by the critical principle referred to as elementary experience.

Thus, applying “elementary experience” as a critical principle requires tradition to be turned into an hypothesis and subordinated under the preponderance of the heart where it is tested for its adequacy as a solution to the human problem (RS, 38). The tradition which is adequate to the exigencies of the heart is either the externalisation of the ideal image from within or something exogenous and wholly different, though complementary to man’s original structure. Throughout, Giussani insists – presumably on the assumption that there is a strict correlation in the knower between intellect and will<sup>101</sup> – that verification establishes tradition’s longevity.<sup>102</sup> The emphasis on conscious appropriation also leads him to the conclusion that tradition, having been understood and tested, can also be “profoundly changed” in “meaning,” “structure,” and “perspective” (RS, 38); that its content is suited to the temperament of the age. The emphasis, only a few sentences later, reiterates the theme of loyalty: “using tradition critically does not mean doubting its value – even if this is what is suggested by the common mentality (RS, 38).”

### ***Anthropology***

(i) Verification, directed to doctrinal certainty, is concerned not only with ontology (the phenomenon *p* as such, the “quiddity” of *p*, being *qua* being, *p* in itself), but with epistemology (how *p* is known), and this has implications for Giussani’s theological anthropology. Formally stated:<sup>103</sup> *p* is observed to display the feeling of moral certainty, the authentic I, and so on. But correspondence is assumed to display the feeling of moral certainty, the authentic I, and so on. Given that *p* displays the class characters of correspondence, by hypothesis *p* is a case of correspondence. Since correspondence is general with respect to *p*, this inference is

---

<sup>101</sup> Such a correlation is thought to exist only in God.

<sup>102</sup> Giussani is also a proponent of obedience, by which he attempts to cultivate the highest regard for authority.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*, 29.

only possible if the class characters of correspondence are habitually in the heart. Differently put, *p* is good in virtue of some positive quality in itself and in relation to some appetitive dynamism of someone who can seek, desire, and love it.<sup>104</sup> The needs of the heart – truth, intelligibility, the Good, the Beautiful (each to an infinite degree) – add to that which a given *p* might have as a matter of its own internal structure. The ontological goodness of *p* is one thing, the ontological goodness of *p* for me is another. The “for me” gestures at the needs of the heart implanted and oriented by God toward God himself. As a result, correspondence is an intuition about the good of *p* with reference to the needs of the heart, where the heart’s needs are infinite and (as taught by revelation) can only be fulfilled by God, who is infinite.

(ii) As a theory of morals, the result of correspondence based on intuition implies that *p* is believed or done instead of *q*; and this is grounded in a sufficient reason of the kind that *p* is more adequate to the problem of desire and my destiny than *q*. The reason comes as a flash of insight, like an intuition, comparable to “the approach of the artist or genius, who, through signs, proceeds to the perception of the true (*RS*, 19).” It settles the problem with an imperative proposition: “I cannot but believe or do *p* instead of *q*, because *p*, as far as I can see, corresponds, at the depths of my being, to the very person that I am.” Differently put, the *feeling* that *p* is right for me is a sign that *p* is adequate to my heart and destiny. Such a feeling is an intuition that signals the end of inquiry, the removal of the doubt which got the epistemological ball rolling in the first place. Giussani writes: “In applying this method, it is as if one makes a fast comparison with oneself, with one’s own ‘elementary experience,’ with one’s own ‘heart,’ and says: ‘Up to this point, what I see corresponds with my heart, with those needs and evidences, with what I was made for; therefore it is true,

---

<sup>104</sup> Cf. “If we call *r* (or reason) the human subject’s cognitive energy and if we call *v* (or value) the reality to be known in so far as it succeeds in penetrating the sphere of human interest, then, according to the position we are looking at, *r* will never be able to have a clear and objective idea of *v*, due to the intermediary and modifying presence of *f* (or feeling). Thus we arrive at the following formula:  $r \rightarrow f \leftarrow v$ . The object of knowledge, in as much as it interests us (*v*), evokes a state of feeling (*f*) that conditions the capacity for knowledge (*r*). The serious use of reason would require either that *f* be eliminated or reduced to a bare minimum. Only by its removal, or, if we will, the drastic reduction of the factor *f*, can knowledge be truly objective – true knowledge of the object. But where, in reality, can we take such a precaution? Only in science and mathematics. [...] With any other type of knowledge – concerning destiny, the affective and political problems – one can never reach objective certainty, a true knowledge of the object (*RS*, 26-27).”



and I can trust [...] (RS, 20-21).” Belief replaces doubt. Coherence is supplied by an equation between belief and the directional movement of the agent.

(iii) The anthropological implications begin to emerge when Giussani probes the kinds of entities that humans are who know *p* truly. The proposition “I want to know *p*” implies “insofar as *p* is knowable;” and the proposition “I want to know *p* insofar as it is knowable” gives rise to the question “How is *p* knowable to me *qua* human being to the extent that it is knowable at all?” The condition of “to me *qua* human being” leads Giussani to comment on the human capacity for knowledge and the methods by which it may be possessed. Given that the question of *p* is abstracted and universalized, then the account of knowing *p* is correspondingly abstracted and universalized. As a result, the theory of knowledge becomes the universal account of how human beings know at all; and the knowledge of *p*, having been determined through a method that is in accordance with human nature, is recommended to all without reserve. What is lost in the epistemological procedure is the fact that interpretation of signs follows from one’s education in a tradition. Moreover, the human enacts this hermeneutic primarily as a conscious being, rather than a communicating and communicative being. Giussani will recover a communicative anthropology when he comes to writing excellently on affection and friendship. In the realm of belief, however, so intrinsic is the theory of knowing to resolving doubt that recommending *p* to oneself or to others without having verified it is to act unreasonably (RS, 21ff.).

(iv) Giussani may be unaware that his insistence on verification reproduces the rationalist (“reductionist”) anthropology he explicitly seeks to overcome. Perhaps he has not sufficiently considered, as the case would appear, that traditions generate varieties of intuitions, some of which are contradictory and incommensurable. Nevertheless, for failing to consider contexts and rival intuitions, he leaves his interlocutors without the tools of argument. His overly optimistic account of verification, based on the heart as “interior stamp,” sees all practitioners agreeing on the ultimate opinion concerning *p*, settling the matter not through discursive reason (of which there is no account), and not through one’s education in a tradition (which

is suggestive, for Giussani, of behaviourism), but by sharing the recurrence of the same insights which bind all human knowers who have freed themselves from the sway of ideology. In the worst case scenario, argument in search of truth is replaced by apologetics, where proponents entrenched in their positions vie for supremacy in a battle of mutually exclusive illuminations.<sup>105</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

For Giussani, serious Christian living is always accompanied by a special act of meaning that is rooted in the heart. While affection is the ultimate level of free, autonomous, and trusting obedience to tradition and authority, the method of attaining to this commitment involves the mental act of interpretation and understanding; i.e., seeking “adequate reasons,” as Giussani puts it. So far, so good. The act of obedience, like the act of faith, however, goes one step further: it is construed as adherence to reality, such that reality and tradition, or reality and religious propositions, are the same. While the “sane person,” therefore, may experience tension between his freedom and obedience to authority, that tension ought to be treated as a surface appearance distracting from the harmony between subjects and tradition that lies at the deepest level of the “I,” the heart. What is more, since the heart is “the same in everyone,” it is the faculty of affective intelligence that unites everyone around universal objects of correspondence, such as the Church.

In the discussion above, I identified certain Cartesian-Kantian tendencies in the author, signalled primarily by the emphasis on self-reflection and the *a priori* categories of the heart. This tendency militates against Giussani’s attempts elsewhere to overturn Cartesian-Kantian approaches to truth, which he feels have entrenched themselves in his native culture against religious belief and practice. As we saw above, Giussani’s theory of correspondence is the method he recommends as the conduit of phenomenological ontology (knowing the object itself), which transcends the common mentality and assures the practitioner that his belief is also a “moral certainty.” Correspondence is also based on a neo-Platonic theory of knowledge, different from Thomas’s meaning of *adaequatio*, which takes its viewpoint for judgement from the “ideal image from within.” Nevertheless, being a

---

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Nicholas Adams, “Reparative Reasoning,” in *Modern Theology* 24.3 (July 2008): 447-457.

strong proponent of tradition, Giussani is forced to back-peddle on his epistemological claims centred on the heart – reinforced by non-philosophical Romantic notions of authenticity – when he equivocates on the authority of tradition, reproducing the narrative of Rahner’s transcendental subject, which he earnestly wants to challenge.<sup>106</sup> His response, albeit unusual, is to assimilate subjects and tradition, basing the possibility of harmony on the correspondence between inner truth and outer reality. On this account, subjects and tradition agree and subjects are united in their agreement over tradition. Angelo Scola, commenting on Giussani’s theology, evaluates this synthesis positively, indicating that Giussani’s method achieves – at least in theory – “the capacity to regain the best results of transcendental thought about freedom.”<sup>107</sup> The subject and authority, on this account, are of one voice.

Despite the tidy ending, readers are often confounded when confronted in the same text by the importance (on the one hand) of forming the heart in a community where masters impart the tradition of centuries to novices, and (on the other hand) trusting the heart as already ready to recognize the truth on immediate impact. Similarly, his readers are at certain points trained (on the one hand) to test the validity of magisterial propositions against the primordial needs of the heart (for Giussani is certain of a fast correspondence insofar as the Magisterium is the guardian of truth and truth is one of the heart’s needs), and (on the other hand) of obeying the ancient tradition with “affection,” knowing that it was bequeathed after two thousand years of faithful devotion to the truth. As these tendencies compete with one another, the challenge that lies before Giussani’s interpreter concerns how to introduce clarity, without ignoring the concerns that led him to frame his discussion of freedom and authority in this way and not in some other.

Giussani’s argument also calls for certain philosophical repairs, which lie beneath the surface confusion. *First*, it is problematic that Giussani makes no provision for the possibility of rival intuitions. The matter concerns the interpretation of signs. There are signs whose meaning can be unproblematic and

---

<sup>106</sup> See “The Hearer of the Message,” in *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (1976; New York: Crossroad, 2004), 24-44.

<sup>107</sup> Angelo Scola, “A Style of Thought,” in *A Generative Thought: An Introduction to the Works of Luigi Giussani*, ed. Elisa Buzzi (Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003), 3-33; here 16.

signs whose meaning is problematic. Giussani's focus is on the former, to the exclusion of the latter. Not only are there no disputes, there is also no doubt. Where rival intuitions arise – as inevitably they must – the certain result of resorting to the heart for judgement unwittingly levels tradition and renders the tools of history, language, and culture unavailable for the repair of real problems in localized situations. *Second*, the effect of the heart on tradition carries important implications for the status given to Scripture as the deepest source of repair. For instance, given that the exigencies of the heart are the primary reality, and the Incarnation a response to them, Giussani fails to account for how the Incarnation directs the heart when educated in a tradition, making the Incarnation appear as an add-on to an already complete anthropology. The subject is then exalted as the “reasonable” (if not altogether *rational*) defender of tradition, rather than as the dependent pupil of its wisdom.

The vaguenesses generated by Giussani's epistemology, and the essentialist claims he makes about tradition, result from his desire to want to settle the ultimate opinion of an indeterminate community of enquirers concerning the question of religion. Giussani's audience, of course, are a real group of people in a localized situation and the problems they raise with him are concrete and particular. The over-generalization of his thesis, however, leads him to rely on a dubious epistemology which not only sits awkwardly with the role he wants to assign to tradition, but replicates the Cartesian-Kantian tendencies he seeks to escape, viz., of addressing particulars with universals. Any attempt to reclaim Giussani's thesis and to save the members of the School of Community from strenuously testing and retesting religious hypotheses requires resituating Giussani's epistemology in the light of history and context.

The possibility of repairing the epistemology's entrenched *a priorism* requires addressing the concerns of his audience whose adscription to Romantic ideals of individualism and authenticity have a direct bearing on their engagement with the propositions of faith, as Giussani realized. By referring Giussani's theory of judgement back to his audience, namely younger generations of Catholics in the 1960s, of which the majority were high school and university students, it is possible to appreciate the authority that tradition must have posed for him. The years of

Giussani's first engagement with students were marked by protests against the establishment, culminating famously in the student riots of 1968. It seems Giussani proceeded on the assumption that the heart might save the individual from losing his identity to the community. At the same time, wanting to avoid a Nietzschean solution, he attempted, perhaps with a certain philosophical naiveté, to accord the tradition with the heart. The heart, Giussani famously said, could not disagree with tradition. In this way, the problem of freedom and authority, just as the act of faith, found a natural basis in the inclination for the good and the aptitude for God. While Giussani correctly recommends the heart to his readers to correct reductionist approaches to reason, it seems he overextends his claim by positing the unity of hearts accorded to a single tradition. A more limited claim would take seriously the possibility of disagreement.

How, then, might one proceed with the repair of Giussani's theory of judgement? To proceed along the lines of a more limited claim, allowing and making provisions for the possibility that disagreement and doubt in the interpretation of a sign do arise within communities, must not be motivated by rational scepticism, i.e., if Giussani's anti-Cartesian stance is to be upheld more consistently. The evaluation of a proposition of faith must occur only when the existing meaning of a sign fails to function according to the longstanding expectations of the community. The importance Giussani accords to the heart in this process is acceptable – to a point. The heart, his codeword for intuition, is generally a solid basis of decision and action, as long as the unexpected does not arise. The unexpected, in this case, would be doubt over the meaning of a sign. In order to resolve the problem of rival intuitions over an equivocal sign, discernment of different options would be required, as well as an account of discursive reason (e.g., the Dominican tradition of *disputatio*). To this end, it will be my task further along to suggest how the method of elementary experience might be expanded to include a possible logic of discernment that already exists within the Catholic tradition, but which perhaps needs to be explicated with greater clarity in Giussani's account.

## CHAPTER TWO

## Freedom

*Il lavoro è l'espressione del nostro essere. Questa coscienza dà veramente respiro all'operaio che per otto ore fatica sul banco di lavoro, come all'imprenditore teso a sviluppare la sua azienda. Ma il nostro essere – ciò che la Bibbia chiama 'cuore': coraggio, tenacia, scaltrezza, fatica – è sete di verità e di felicità. Non esiste opera, da quella umile della casalinga a quella geniale del progettista, che possa sottrarsi a questo riferimento, alla ricerca di una soddisfazione piena, di un compimento umano. – Luigi Giussani (2000)<sup>1</sup>*

## INTRODUCTION

## Preamble

This chapter takes up Giussani's account of freedom. The principle point of access will be through *L'io, il potere, e le opere (IPO)*, a collection of writings in political theology. For analysis, I have grouped speeches from the second part of *IPO, Le Opere* (pp. 97-161), which deals explicitly with intermediate communities in the political sphere.<sup>2</sup>

- (i) "La libertà alla radice dell'opera" [Freedom at the root of an *oeuvre*] (pp. 99-123),
- (ii) "Dacci un cuore grande per amare" [Grant us a generous heart with which to love] (pp. 124-133),
- (iii) "Di fronte al bisogno, un'ipotesi positivo" [In the face of need, a positive hypothesis] (pp. 134-147),
- (iv) "La compagnia si dilata in libertà" [Companionship flourishes in freedom] (pp. 148-164).

I will also make reference to a fifth essay, "Senso religioso, opere, politica," famously presented before the *Assemblea della Democrazia Cristiana lombarda* at Assago in 1987, which is the basis of the speeches cited above. It is a suggestive text

---

<sup>1</sup> "Your work is the expression of the essence of what it means to be human. To be aware of this is to give breath to the worker who for eight hours labours at his work bench, just as the entrepreneur makes efforts to develop his business. But our being – that which the Bible calls 'heart': courage, tenaciousness, shrewdness, fatigue – is thirst for truth and happiness. There cannot be an *oeuvre*, from the work of the humble homemaker to the genius of the protagonist, that can exclude itself from this reference, from the search for a full satisfaction, for a sense of human completion (*IPO*, 91)."

<sup>2</sup> Giussani, *L'io, il potere, e le opere: Contributi da un'esperienza* (Milan: Marietti, 2000).

rather than a detailed exposition, and therefore unsuitable for in-depth analysis.

Together, these five pieces represent Giussani's central concerns and reflections on the role and importance of institutions in society. Their genesis occurs rather late in Giussani's career, from 1992-1995, and may be seen to synthesise many years of experience and reflection on the topic of freedom and authority, as he himself says (*IPO*, 171). Moreover, as the editor points out (*IPO*, 278), parts of these speeches are rewoven into other important texts authored by Giussani, such as *The Risk of Education* (1995).

Giussani's conceptualization of freedom in *IPO* lends itself to a division of materials according to questions of freedom in politics and questions of freedom in the Church. I introduce this division more explicitly than Giussani, labelling the categories *Freedom 1* and *Freedom 2*, in order to facilitate the exposition of materials over five different essays. Having said that, since one of Giussani's central arguments concerns the intrinsic value of religion to culture, what is said of freedom in one category is very often of significance to the other.

Under the category of *Freedom 1*, I organize Giussani's materials pertaining to freedom in the public sphere. Descriptions that fall here presuppose the universal importance of specific kinds of freedom, such as religious freedom, freedom of conscience, and freedom of association. Giussani seems to single out these kinds of freedom because he believes they are under threat from the overextension of government. Giussani, therefore, identifies the political conditions required for the actualization of these kinds of freedom, particularly by promoting the intervention of intermediate communities. He redefines political entities (e.g., a state, a people, and a constitution) according to the Principle of Subsidiarity in order to argue that the absence of intermediate communities is a grave impediment to political health. When the norms for which he is arguing might be called into doubt, he refers to the basic philosophical description of what it means to be human. Giussani, therefore, authoritatively and prescriptively invokes the language of "fundamental freedoms" used both in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) and Pope John XXIII's (1958-1963) encyclical on religious freedom, *Pacem in Terris*. In doing so, he implies that the limitation of these kinds of freedom is a humanitarian concern,

putting him in a position to advance his argument with urgency to all men of good will.

Under the category of *Freedom 2*, I consider Giussani's account of the role and importance of freedom in terms of its relationship to the act of faith. He seeks a principle by which to explain how obedience to doctrine and to the longstanding custom of the community, including obedience to the moral law, might be intelligent obedience, consistent with our nature as rational beings. He recovers the principle for which he is searching in his definition of the heart, as expounded in *The Religious Sense* (1997), presupposing an anthropological relationship between religion and the human person. In this sense, Giussani argues that the human person naturally attains his or her fulfillment through the arrival of religious propositions, even if one may be unaware of this fact. Religious propositions, such as the proposition that God exists, are mediated by an "encounter," e.g., the impact with the real (generally), or the Church (specifically). They manifest themselves as true in the heart's intimation of the infinite for which it longs, traditionally culminating in the "beatific vision."

Given that Giussani postulates a strict correlation between person and religion, he classifies the tension that may arise between moral obedience and individuality as a problem of understanding. Once a moral fact is known and judged for what it is, *de natura* and in relation to reality, any initial resistance to obedience – rooted, perhaps, in an errant inclination to radical individualism – gives way to an intellectual conviction which shapes decision and action. Differently put, insofar as Giussani presupposes that subjects and objects are essentially the same, the act of understanding shows that obedience anticipates the harmonious completion of the subject through the moral law and the theological sources from which it stems, and this cannot but have an effect on deciding and acting, including the shaping of civilization, in a manner more suited to God's design of the world and the human person. The category of *Freedom 2* is completed with Giussani's reading of John 8:32: "the truth will set you free," where adherence to God, Christ, and the Church – each of which are synonymous with truth – are the only paths to freedom insofar as it can be authentically conceived.



## Problem

Giussani's explicit aim in these speeches is to address certain problems in the Italian cultural context of his day using a quite untheoretical apparatus. Indeed, his whole project from 1954 to 2005 was described by him as a "pastoral and educative attempt," backed by *Gaudium et Spes* and the concept of "New Evangelization," to render theology more immediately relevant to the ordinary concerns of daily life.<sup>3</sup> This aim is clearly stated at various intervals in the speeches on freedom, such as when Giussani calls attention to his desire to equip his audience with a "new approach to life," which is also capable of resolving "concrete concerns" in a manner that is both "realistic" and "prudential" (see especially *IPO*, 168-170). Giussani proceeds to deliver practical solutions to real problems by formulating maxims, which he deems to be concrete, such as "Politics is an affair that concerns the human person," (*IPO*, 173), and "Freedom is a word that must be learned by observing one's own nature." The "concrete" nature of these maxims is captured in their aversion to abstract and utopian philosophy (*IPO*, 175), it seems to Giussani, by way of their existentialist and personalist content.<sup>4</sup> They are for the author practical-theories-to-live-by.

There is, on the one hand, something compelling in Giussani's attempt to repair real problems in this way. His audience, on the other hand, have on occasion deemed his approach to be "unusual" (*insolita*) and "unuseful" (*non usuale*), as revealed by the responses to the Assago speech (*IPO*, 171). For instance, one of Giussani's friendlier interviewers noted that none of the content from the address ever made its way into concrete political deliberations, nor did it ever impact social policy (*IPO*, 172). In reply, Giussani admitted that his speech might indeed be difficult to comprehend. He offered as reasons both the "accentuation of elementary human considerations" and "the mentality of certain individuals which is so far

---

<sup>3</sup> The term New Evangelization appeared with Pope Paul VI's 1975 encyclical *Evangelii nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World). Similar to the 1965 pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (The Church in the Modern World), it responded to the question of the Church in the modern world. John Paul II also adopted the term New Evangelization in his 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate), which spoke about proclaiming the Gospel anew to the baptized who were distant from the Church.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. "[...] it would be useful to re-emphasise that the solution to the great question about life, which constitutes reason, is not an abstract hypothesis but an existential commitment, because this need is a lived experience (*RS*, 118)."

removed from what it means to be human that the very meaning of the words was lost on them (*IPO*, 172).” Apart from the obvious antagonism with which representatives of the church are met in the increasingly secularized milieu of Italian politics, to which Giussani is surely gesturing in his reply, some criticism of the text’s pragmatic purport is warranted, I contend, on the basis that Giussani’s maxims fail to equip his audience with tools to achieve the concrete results they intend to deliver.

It is not uncommon for experienced members of *Communion and Liberation* (CL) to have difficulty comprehending Giussani’s texts. Moreover, their attempts to elucidate his writings, at the meetings of the School of Community, for example, often reproduce the kinds of vaguenesses that characterize his writing.

Among others, Giussani’s strategy is replicated by Bernhard Scholz, president of the *Associazione Compagnia delle Opere* (CDO).<sup>5</sup> The following remarks, delivered to businessmen and entrepreneurs at the outset of the financial crisis in 2007, capture Scholz’s essential response to the potential meltdown of the global economy: “Your labour is an *oeuvre*. Labour, be it yours, mine, or ours, has a value which does not have as its term success, profit, career, or power. The value of work is a matter that concerns the heart. It is the heart that expresses itself, that risks in order that reality be transformed into a dwelling (*dimora*) more adequate to its needs. That dwelling is a place where charity and beauty abide.”<sup>6</sup> Scholz’s remarks recall Giussani’s response to earlier concerns that had troubled his audience. It is, however, important to note how substantially different those earlier concerns had been; namely, “Whether the experience of work, with all its toil and fatigue, can be lived as an experience of fullness?” and, in a related sense, “What conditions in the public sphere are needed for agents to exercise their creative potential so as to express the desire for truth, justice, beauty, and unity, in accordance also with their

---

<sup>5</sup> Compagnia Delle Opere (CDO) is an arm of the Communion and Liberation (CL) movement. Founded under Giussani’s guidance in 1986, the CDO exists “to promote and protect the dignified presence of persons in society and in every kind of work, including the maintenance of projects and undertakings in society, favouring a conceptualization of the economic market and its regulation that favours the person in every facet, dimension and moment of his life.” (*Compagnia delle Opere*, <http://www.cdo.org/tabid/140/Default.aspx>, accessed June 29, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> Bernhard Scholz, “Il tuo lavoro è un opera: Al tempo della crisi, protagonisti della speranza.” Keynote address, annual meeting of the Compagnia delle Opere, Teatro della gioventù, Genova, Liguria March 10, 2009. (My translation).

historical, religious and cultural backgrounds?” Whether the kind of response Scholz forged from Giussani’s texts was applied either to Giussani’s concerns or to the global financial crisis has little bearing on the outcome if the benefit is to be measured in terms of concrete results. The vagueness displayed here, as elsewhere through the speeches, is irredeemable, only if further material, not present in the original formulations, is introduced into the discussion: no amount of poring over would suffice to introduce clarity. While Giussani seems to be identifying the right problems, the tendencies which generate the problem are left intact.

### **Hypothesis**

There are many different kinds of problem Giussani attempts to address in *IPO*; e.g., how can freedom be secured with truth claims which must be held? In the concrete decisions and actions of ordinary life, how is adherence to truth compatible with freedom in its self-expressive dimensions, particularly the discovery of the “I”? How is the Church’s account of obedience to the Magisterium compatible with freedom? Can freedom be ascribed to the subject whose defence of truth leaves him standing alone in the public square? What description of freedom would permit religious institutions to be autonomous and also to flourish in civil society?

In general, there are two principal ways of addressing these problems: treating them either as “why” questions or treating them as “how” questions. “Why” questions in the realm of religious belief and practice follow this pattern: “Why should I hold  $x$  to be true, adopting it as a principle of decision and action when  $y$  is the case, where  $y$  represents disagreement with  $x$  or inconvenient circumstance impeding the implementation of  $x$ ?” “How” questions, instead, follow this pattern: “Given that I am already inducted in the tradition which holds  $x$  to be true, how in light of my disagreement with  $x$  or inconvenient circumstances impeding  $x$ ’s implementation am I to hold it and use it as a principle for decision and action?”

Thinking of Old Testament texts as models, one can call “why” questions “law” questions (of the kind addressed in Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy), and “how” questions “wisdom” questions (of the kind addressed in Psalms, Job, Proverbs, etc.)

Problems are compounded when “law” questions are given “wisdom” answers and vice versa. “Law” questions are universal and prescriptive. In the case of freedom, they draw on a previously established rule to ask whether *p* counts as a legitimate exercise of freedom. “Wisdom” questions, instead, are casuistic: they involve the application of universal principles to particular cases. For example, Christ’s command to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,”<sup>7</sup> is a clear rule against which infractions are immediately recognizable. And yet, to absolve one’s detractor, for example, without some sign of contrition and reparation would be foolishly to place oneself in harm’s way where one’s integrity could continue to be compromised. To respond by estrangement, minimally, would seem to redress the injustice suffered and prevent its recurrence. Thus the command to “love one’s enemies and pray for those who persecute you” becomes a question of “how” this is to take place in a particular case with its own complex set of circumstances. So while “law” questions are suited to recovering the ultimate purpose and meaning of something, “wisdom” questions concern how something is to be done, say, *to realize a desire*, but more commonly, to decide *what is to be done in a given situation*, where it is not a desire that presents itself as the focus of attention, but *a problem* that arises *en face* of the desire.<sup>8</sup>

Giussani tends to give “law” answers to “wisdom” questions. This tendency frustrates the pragmatic purport of his texts. For example, why I should forgive my enemy who has caused my great suffering comes down to “what I have met,” e.g., Christ in the Movement, which is the place where I have encountered reality in its fullness and become more human. Laws themselves are as good and fundamental to human nature as their practical counterpart, wisdom: they assist the mind when it is uncertain to seek the right relation of means to end by keeping clear what is true and

---

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 5:44.

<sup>8</sup> The basic distinction is between theory and practical action. See Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* III 3 for a similar distinction with regards to deliberation. Theorizing is an important facet of wisdom, although it expounds the objective criteria for action in terms of ultimate ends. Wisdom is directed to resolving practical problems. Two questions apply here, both of which are pragmatic, not epistemological. One question concerns “how to attain O in C,” while the more common question is “*what am I to do about this*,” where *this* refers to some circumstance. For a detailed commentary on Aristotle’s distinction see Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 232 ff.

good;<sup>9</sup> yet, as universals, they can fit particular circumstances awkwardly. Thus, according to Thomas Aquinas, it is not that law or universals are unimportant; rather, in the hurly-burly, where the agent is to identify particular actions through which to approach a problem, the character of the knowledge sought is not like the knowledge of law or universals, but that which delivers the best approach possible to the situation in question.<sup>10</sup>

The account is most often vague when it offers “why” answers to “how” questions. Giussani’s preference for “why” answers can be traced historically to tensions in the Italian cultural context of his day involving concerns that turn on questions of autonomy and obedience. I will define Giussani’s attempt to navigate these concerns differently throughout this chapter. For the time being, they refer to his attempt to ground law in an anthropological principle. When, for instance, someone’s daily experience of work overwhelms her with a sense of meaninglessness, and she is wont to ask how her discomfort may be relieved, Giussani expounds *why* work is intrinsic to the definition of what it means to be human, as seen in the epigraph above (*IPO*, 91). When Giussani frames the problem as a “why” question (why work is important), he views the problem as related to questions about the meaning and purpose of life. Any other manner of solving the problem, according to Giussani, is philosophical, and, thus, obtuse. The interlocutor eventually learns to trace all concrete problems not to their particular origins, but to a personal failure (e.g., of immaturity, superficiality, or pusillanimity), that prevents her from seeing the depths of reality. It is not unusual, therefore, for members of CL to meet some rather complex human problems with dogmatic replies.

Regarding Giussani’s reply, two issues cry out for determination. *First*, the recurrence to maxims about reality, which presume the individual’s complaint is over a case of existential *ennui*, overlooks other potential sources of unhappiness, such as a superior’s unkindness. The original question asked of Giussani, however, may not pose the problem of the theoretical understanding of work, but of how obedience

---

<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1138 b35-1139 a 17. See also Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 174-175.

<sup>10</sup> The enquiry of counsel is concerned, properly speaking, with contingent singulars. Now the knowledge of the truth in such matters does not rank so high as to be desirable of itself, as is the knowledge of things universal and necessary; but it is desired as being useful toward action. (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II 14.3).”

may be thoughtful obedience, and of what course of action to take in a situation that is morally difficult *because* one is Catholic (e.g., how to deal with an unkind superior). *Second*, to the extent that a theoretical understanding of work casts light on the concrete problem, Giussani's recurrence to maxims about reality do not offer a strong impersonal account on which the interlocutor can depend for a robust theory of the value of work. Here, Giussani's choice of a poetic mode of exposition, rather than a systematic one, while consistent with his ongoing polemic against "logic" and "abstraction," compromises the integrity of the impersonal account, insofar as it exists. In summary, the assumption Giussani makes about his own approach to problems, namely, that he is addressing real problems with practical-theories-to-live-by, is undermined by buying into impersonal accounts which he fails to complete. The impersonal accounts would themselves be conducive to the pragmatic aims of the text were they permitted to run their course; but the urgency Giussani imposes on himself and his interlocutors to remain concrete short-circuits this process.

### **Purpose**

The aim of this chapter is to help Giussani achieve the pragmatic delivery of his insights concerning freedom by clarifying areas of vagueness. Vaguenesses in the speeches of *IPO*, however, cannot be addressed simply by bypassing the impersonal account in order to develop the pragmatic one. To introduce clarity, a distinction in genre must be marked –which Giussani fails to observe – between uttering an impersonal account (on the one hand) and a practical-theory-to-live-by (on the other hand). While both theory and praxis are relevant to the problems Giussani is addressing, the unwitting conflation of genres invariably affects the overall clarity, consistency, and coherence of the work. Consider the relevance of this distinction through the following analogy:

Science undertakes to offer impersonal accounts and the theory of evolution is one such account. If evolution were cited as a practical-theory-to-live-by, the results in ethics would be disastrous. It would be unreasonable for human beings to carry on as though they were primates on the basis of their evolutionary ancestry. Conversely, practical-theories-to-live-by undertake to address problems in ordinary life. If they are invoked to challenge scientific accounts, such as the theory of

evolution, they undertake a task which they are too ill-equipped to handle. It would be odd, in other words, to reject the theory of evolution on the basis of a worry that its promulgation would lead human beings to act like primates. There is a reason for the impersonal account, and it is scientific, not practical. Impersonal accounts have one role, similar to law, and practical-theories-to-live-by have another, similar to wisdom. Neither kind of account is hermetically sealed from the other. Considerable overlap might even be desirable between them. In the end, both seek sufficient answers to different kinds of question.

A second aim of this chapter, then, involves carrying out some of the theoretical work Giussani side-stepped. For this reason, the impersonal account must be taken seriously. At the same time, while the first aim of this chapter is to help Giussani deliver a more focussed account of freedom, particularly with regards to the protagonism of Christians in the public sphere, the existing emphasis on *why* Christians should take “protagonism” seriously must not overlook *how* this end is to be achieved in the cultural, linguistic, and historical context of the day. Such a consideration would not attend the arrival of a rule by which to govern every conceivable problem that could arise everywhere and at all times, but an account of discernment and discursive reason, derived from the deepest sources of Giussani’s tradition, which accommodates particularity.

## Method

This chapter will move through successive stages of reading to bring Giussani’s account of freedom into greater focus. I suggested above that the account’s vagueness can only be redeemed by introducing further material that is not present in the original. I propose to make use of a stronger account of freedom with Robert Spaemann’s assistance. In reading Spaemann alongside Giussani, I will attend especially to the few areas of difference that separate the accounts. The precise points of difference will be traced to a set of leading tendencies that stem from one of Giussani’s unarticulated worries. Using history, context, and intellectual biography, I will reconstruct that worry so that the explicit text can be referenced to Giussani’s original question. At the same time, I will address certain areas of

vagueness, which owe to both competing tendencies in the account and areas of philosophical weakness.

### **The Occasion of the Text**

*IPO* collects Giussani's reflections in political theology spanning from 1970 to 2000. Many of the most important texts are addressed specifically to the *Compagnia delle Opere* (CDO), an association of investors, businessmen, and entrepreneurs engaged in the twofold objective of facilitating the exchange of resources between small enterprises (especially non-profit organizations), and directing businesses toward "the creation of a more adequate dwelling for the human heart." The CDO was established in 1986 under Giussani's guidance, and draws on the language and content of many writings published for CL. Through its initiatives, the CDO promotes the cooperation of Church and state, bringing the perspective promoted by CL to secular contexts through extra-ecclesial vehicles. The content and style of the speeches, described as *maieutic*, are intentionally tailored to reach university-educated Catholics whose exposure to the Catholic intellectual tradition is minimal and even tainted, the author fears, by the common (secularist) mentality.

### **Exegetical Considerations**

The interpreter faces certain difficulties caused by the dense and compressed nature of Giussani's speeches. For instance, as is typical and proper for a speech, the author displays a preference for lapidary statements rather than the slow development of complex arguments; sources are not consistently cited; and the choice and organization of materials are subject to rhetorical technique. Giussani poses additional difficulties by using technical terms unconventionally (e.g., "evidences"); coining neologisms (e.g., "communital"); using single terms to mean different things (e.g., heart means reason, intuition, and instinct); and creating the appearance of agreement between the authors, between whom, in fact, there are deep differences (e.g., Thomas Aquinas [1215-1274] and Vladimir Solov'ëv [1853-1900]<sup>11</sup>).

---

<sup>11</sup> Giussani may have encountered Vladimir Solov'ëv's writings through Hans Urs von Balthasar. Balthasar explores Solov'ëv as one of the seven lay writers whose style reveals "the glory of God's revelation." See *The Glory of the Lord*, volume iii: *Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles*, tr.



### PLAIN-SENSE READING

This section aims as plainly as possible to convey Giussani's explicit account of freedom. Since the account is reconstructed from four different speeches, I have organized materials under three of Giussani's categories in order to avoid repetition: desire, social responsibility, and belonging.

#### *Desire*

Desire is an important facet of freedom, according to Giussani, because freedom secures a sphere of action for the individual, and action originates in desire (*IPO*, 104, 168). Giussani conducts his discussion around three themes: teleology, natural theology, and realism.

The term desire, with respect to action, gestures at the importance of goals and presupposes that persons are goal-directed (*IPO*, 168). Persons act for reasons and desires are reasons for acting. Desires may stem either from base reactions or from self-conscious reflection (cf. *USD*, 117). The latter, with which Giussani is mainly concerned, stem from the heart's needs and exigencies, manifested in the desire for happiness, truth, justice, satisfaction, and beauty (*IPO*, 52-53). Through these goods the soul ultimately tends to God. For this reason, desires rooted in the heart are expressive of a "religious sense," namely: "[the moment when] the thirst for truth and happiness relates to the ultimate good, to the total significance of things, which exceeds our imaginations or our ability to define them (*IPO*, 92)." A "religious sense," moreover, represents the highest expression of human rationality, "the vertex of reason," insofar as reason is consciousness of reality according to the "totality of its factors" (*IPO*, 92). The "totality of factors" reminds the reader that the awareness of God takes in the whole of reality, while everything else is only part of that reality (*IPO*, 118). For Giussani, as for Augustine, God alone satisfies desire completely (*IPO*, 113-114). In God all our motion ultimately finds its rest.

Desire, as a principle of action, is related to freedom in another way. Desire impels us to act, and *only* in acting (*in actu exercito*) do we become aware of

---

Andrew Louth, John Saward, Martin Simon, and Rowan Williams (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, and San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 279-352.

ourselves and of the ultimate horizon of things (*IPO*, 119). Action secured by freedom is not only the means by which to improve the condition of life in society according to our goal-directed nature, it is the means through which the authentic “I” comes to light (*IPO*, 119, cf. 53, 99). Giussani makes his argument from authority, citing Thomas Aquinas: “*In hoc aliquis percipit se animam habere et vivere et esse, quod percipit se sentire et intelligere et alia huiusmodi opera vitae exercere* [One perceives oneself as having a soul and as living and as being inasmuch as one perceives oneself as feeling and understanding and exercising other similar tasks related to life] (*IPO*, 119).”<sup>12</sup> Thomas’s dictum leads Giussani to make two further claims, one related to the “I,” the other to God. *First*, to impede action, and particularly to deprive the human person of the opportunity to make a personal contribution and so to be incisive on society, is to deprive him of the opportunity to know himself (*IPO*, 103, 119). *Second*, the consciousness we gradually attain of our ultimate needs and exigencies, which leads eventually to the proposition that God exists, is discovered by running up against the limitations of human action: the disproportion between what we ourselves can accomplish and the infinity that every heart structurally requires for its satisfaction (*IPO*, 118, 123). The limitation of freedom would impede access to the proposition that God exists insofar as it would prevent persons from realizing that action has a limit that calls out for completion in someone greater than the self and society at large, namely God (*IPO*, 117).

Reality is the “I’s” field of action; the “I” and reality unite harmoniously in a synthesis called action of which desire is the catalyst (*IPO*, 101-102). Reality is, at the same time, bounded by the real: actors mould their movements from reality, not from some imagined ideal. Once desire gets concretized in action, it can only be adequate to the extent that it corresponds to the “needs” and “exigencies” of the heart (*IPO*, 102). The object of labour, then, is to realize in society a dwelling more adequate to the heart (*IPO*, 108, 129-133). Through action, one also comes into contact with “the Mystery” (*IPO*, 106). This is because action is real prayer and there is no prayer that does not originate in or express action (*IPO*, 102). And since prayer expresses the “I’s” love for Christ, action, which is prayer, expresses the same thing. The love of Christ, sought and received, helps us to grow, to become mature

---

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Questiones disputate de veritate*, q. X, art. 8, c. (My translation).

and wise; the attainment of these ends differs radically from the cynical, accusatory, and despotic action that dominates the present cultural climate, which is reinforced by mass media (*IPO*, 102).

### *Social Responsibility*

Giussani, addressing his generalized reflections on freedom to the CDO, applies the concept of social responsibility to the problem of cultural decline. The term “provocation” (*provocazione*) marks a crucial distinction for Giussani in this part of the account. One can only be “provoked” by real problems, not paper-generated doubts or second guessing. Freedom is related to truth or infinity insofar as it is satisfied in the heart, not the will (*IPO*, 114). Thus, discourse about freedom, insofar as it concerns action and intervention, entails a vaster horizon: the infinite desire for goodness, beauty, justice, etc. (*IPO*, 126). Social responsibility, it follows, entails the acquisition and protection of actual goods and includes a religious dimension insofar as individual goods, including the goods of ordinary life, participate in the all encompassing goodness of God (*IPO*, 100, 105, 168). Giussani invokes social responsibility as a fulcrum by which to encourage members of the CDO to take stock of and address the problem of cultural decline. His recommendation for renewal cites the perspective of Alasdair MacIntyre as outlined in *After Virtue* (*IPO*, 158-159).<sup>13</sup> Giussani also incorporates T. S. Eliot’s (1888-1965) modern historical survey in *The Choruses from the Rock*, which paints a devastating before-and-after picture of Modernity, to add greater urgency to his cry for religious freedom and the freedom of religious institutions (*IPO*, 103, 104).<sup>14</sup>

The quotation Giussani takes from *After Virtue* diagnoses cultural decline, compares it with the decline of Roman civilization, and delivers a prognosis for effective renewal. According to MacIntyre: *First*, individuals need to come around to a shared understanding that a real problem needs addressing. To this end, a heightened awareness of the current situation and a willingness to evaluate it truthfully from within a moral tradition must be cultivated. *Second*, local forms of

<sup>13</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (1984; Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2003), 263. At *IPO* 159 Giussani quotes the Italian edition, translated by M. D’Avenia as *Dopo la virtù. Saggio di teoria morale* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1993), 313.

<sup>14</sup> Especially T. S. Eliot, “Coro VII,” in *Cori da “La Rocca,”* tr. Roberto Sanesi [“Chorus VII” in *Choruses from the Rock*] (Milan: BUR, 1994).

community need to be erected and sustained as the principal *loci* for supporting the intellectual and moral life on the basis of which reflection takes place.<sup>15</sup> *Third*, communities cannot flourish without the cultivation of the virtues; forgetfulness of the virtues results in the kinds of ills and fragmentation seen at all levels of society. *Fourth*, since the tradition of the virtues managed to survive the “horrors of the last dark ages,” the current state of cultural decline could be reversed if we were to reinstate at the centre of society the teaching and practice of the classical virtues. Christianity, it should be recalled, was the vehicle through which the virtues were preserved and transmitted when civilization was last under threat. Perhaps again, through Christianity, civilization might be saved. Giussani finds a “strict correspondence” between MacIntyre’s argument and the motives behind social intervention in CL and the CDO, even if he feels for himself that the “terms [of engagement?]” are “not exactly the same (*IPO*, 158-159; 208-209).”

Faced with the same problem, Giussani and MacIntyre agree on the role and importance of “intermediate communities,” above all (*IPO*, 169). Giussani introduces the Catholic definition of subsidiarity in order to justify the intervention of the CDO, and similar kinds of “intermediate communities” (*IPO*, 117, 176-177). He presents the case for subsidiarity through the same dichotomy used to describe freedom’s two sides: the first involves *freedom from* something (e.g., ideology, the common mentality, the over-extension of government [i.e., *statalismo*], etc.), and the second involves *freedom for something* (e.g., the erection of religious schools, deciding not being decided for, the construction of a dwelling more adequate to the heart, etc.).

In the realm of *freedom from*, Giussani names specific adversaries from whom the subject is to be emancipated: Ernst Bloch (1885-1977), blamed for “the abstract and futuristic hope of Marxism” (*IPO*, 20; 175),<sup>16</sup> and Antonio Gramsci

---

<sup>15</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 263.

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Bloch, a German intellectual, influenced by the thought of Hegel and Marx, and author of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (3 vols.: 1938–1947) (trans.: *The Principle of Hope*, MIT Press, 1986), believed that a progressive unfolding of history was possible in a world fully illuminated by reason. He believed that the total abolition of oppression and exploitation, were it understood as a progressively achievable ideal – albeit utopian – could animate social transformation *en masse*. The distance Giussani seeks from Bloch bespeaks of the similarities in their thought. Both men recognised a teleological drive toward the end of life process (*Endziel*, in Bloch’s terminology, and “satisfaction/*satis-facere*,” in Giussani’s terminology), which, causally, was driven by the pursuit of the ideal of fullness (that pursuit being “the force of hunger,” in Bloch’s terminology, and “desire,” in Giussani’s terminology).

(1891-1937), a social activist, under whose influence the younger Giussani himself had briefly fallen sway (*IPO*, 134), blamed for prioritizing systems over the individual.<sup>17</sup> Giussani buttresses his attack on Gramsci with help from Romano Guardini (1885-1968), whose reflections on authority and power lead Giussani to compare the problem of big government to totalitarianism (*IPO*, 9-10, 166, 175).<sup>18</sup>

In the realm of *freedom* for the subject pursues goals such as truth, justice, and beauty – transcendent values secured through the efforts of intermediate communities, such as CL and CDO (*IPO*, 180 ff.). The particular goal to which the pursuit of truth, justice, and beauty leads is the creation of a dwelling more adequate to the “needs” and “exigencies” of the heart (*IPO*, 41 and dozens of other references). All other forms of freedom – the freedom to associate, the freedom to decide and not to be decided for – refer back to the values inscribed by the heart to the objects submitted to its scrutiny. And since the heart has an innate aptitude for God (*IPO*, 135), the standard of perfection in society – if freedom is considered to be part of that perfection – is that which accommodates heart’s needs: promoting religious belief through education, ensuring the visibility of the Church, allowing religious movements, supporting religious institutions, and so on (*IPO*, 104). Giussani seals this argument with John XXIII’s encyclical *Mater et magistra*, where the freedom of association is “essentialized” using the secular language of

---

There is a crucial difference between the two authors caused by a difference of axioms: Bloch’s philosophy replaces the vertical teleology of Augustine and Thomas, on which Giussani drew (viz., the earthly pilgrimage to heaven), with a horizontal understanding of history, action, potentiality, and ordinary life. In contrast to Giussani, Bloch directs his reader’s attention to the “immanent” rather than the “transcendent” sphere. Bloch’s immanence, then, draws on Hegel and Marx to postulate “historical figuration,” the unfolding of future events according to regular laws of necessity, while Giussani’s is an existential interpretation of Thomism that emphasises the freedom of human action and moral responsibility in the immanent sphere. See “Block, Ernst,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., ed. Ted Honderich (1995; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 100.

<sup>17</sup> Antonio Gramsci, an Italian intellectual, influenced by the thought of Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), was a strong proponent of socialism. His sensitivity to the plight of peasants in industrializing centres convinced him of the need to secure popular support and to establish an alliance between the working class and peasantry in order to effectuate a socialist revolution, challenging Marx’s idea (*Das Kapital*) that a revolution had to await the full development of capitalist forces. To this end, ideas – political and ideological – had the potential, he thought, to mobilize the masses and achieve social consensus. Thus he argued strongly for the expansion of democratic rule. See “Gramsci” and “Bloch,” in *Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Thomas Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband, eds. (1983; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 221 and 53.

<sup>18</sup> Giussani quotes Romano Guardini, “Il Potere” in *La fine del epoca moderna* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1993). For the English version see *The End of the Modern World: A Search for Orientation*, translated by Joseph Theman and Herbert Burke, ed. Frederick D. Wilhelmsen (1956; Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 1998).

“inalienable rights” (IPO, 94, 104). Giussani is happy with the language of “inalienable rights” because the heart involves a set of problems that are humanly interesting, by virtue of which they are also theologically interesting.

### *Freedom for Humanity*

Quoting Emanuel Mounier’s *Lettere sul dolore*, Giussani states: “It is necessary to suffer lest truth be fossilised in doctrine and prevented from giving life in the flesh (IPO, 160).” The significance of the flesh is reinforced by the Incarnation (*la carne*). That God chose to reveal himself in the flesh speaks to the fact that we are conditioned to receive truth in a certain way given the kind of creatures we are (IPO, 160).<sup>19</sup> Since it is our humanity that needs completing, it is at the level of flesh and bones that desire is manifested and by means of which it is satisfied (IPO, 81). This emphasis on flesh and bones militates against abstract theology and reinforces the principle of subsidiarity with essentialist claims about the human person’s need to work with others: “the flesh [Christ] took on, through which he chose not to abandon us, is the human companionship that recognizes him and invests itself entirely, without compromise, in the reality that it lives every day, because the design of the Mystery unfolds through our daily life, the reality which incites us daily (IPO, 102).”

The ancillary role played by religious associations and movements ultimately requires governments to roll back in order that the creativity and artisanship of the ordinary worker be permitted to have an incisive effect on society (IPO, 197). By directing talent and energy to the problems of society, the individual’s authentic “I” comes to the surface. Giussani writes: “It is through the realization of my work that I understand myself as free. [...] Man does not come to know himself by thinking about himself (this would require an level of objectivity that few are capable of reaching even with good philosophical training), but perceiving the value of his self, his talents, his abilities; i.e., working, in *actu exercito*, as Thomas Aquinas says. A

---

<sup>19</sup> While Giussani does not say so, he is following the lead of Carlo Figini (1883-1967), a former professor of theology from Venegono and the local *ensor librorum*, who had adopted the Scotist position on the Incarnation, namely, “that the Word would have become flesh even if there had not been Original Sin.” (Antonio Rimoldi, interview by Massimo Camisasca, October 6, 1988, Archives of Communion and Liberation, Via Porpora 127, Milan; quoted in Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione*, volume 1, 77, footnote 5).

man only knows himself in action, through action, while he is acting (*IPO*, 119).” It is in acting (*in actu exercito*) that the person discovers herself. Freedom for association, therefore, is also freedom to discover one’s true “I.” The CDO was founded precisely with this objective in mind (*IPO*, 160). By means of the encouragement and support it lends local projects, the CDO fosters in its members an understanding of the human person as a protagonist in the realization of a society more adequate to the heart. In the same way the CDO is the means through which its members discover and express their true “I.” Whereas some would contend that the emphasis on the person might destabilize the centrality of God in the moral shaping of society, Giussani believes a true and profound understanding of the human person, acquired through action, cannot but conclude in the proposition “I am You-who-make-me” (cf. *RS*, 109).

### *Belonging (appartenenza)*

Belonging plays three important roles in Giussani’s account of freedom. *First*, the passion of individuals for justice and mercy (e.g., “better living conditions,” and the “meeting and solidarity of peoples”) is motivated in large part by the phenomenon of belonging (*IPO*, 127). It is because someone or something has claimed one’s allegiance that the question arises as to how this or that action might promote the well being of the beloved. The desire to improve conditions for humanity, above all, is an impetus for Christian charity (*IPO*, 180-181). By the same token, the willingness to undergo suffering for an other is a sign of fidelity (*IPO*, 95). Thus, obedience, insofar as it entails self-denial, is motivated by love, not punishment (*IPO*, 152). Obedience is also a test of true communion, particularly in the context of friendship (*IPO*, 93-93,129) and life in the Church (*IPO*, 89, 178, 182). *Second*, community is the agent’s source of strength and encouragement where the task of adhering to the truth and doing what is right is toilsome. Witnesses are “inevitably” required to undertake “risks” and “sacrifices” which are mitigated by the companionship of others who are willing to undergo the same trials to achieve the same ends (*IPO*, 159). A moral companionship, which Giussani deems a “necessary dimension and condition” for risk-taking, is called the “communital phenomenon.” It is within the “communital dimension and condition,” the state of “communiality”

(*communità*), that an *oeuvre* is born (*IPO*, 157 ff.). What “communiality” adds to decision is the “energy and freedom” that militates against complacency and pusillanimity (*RS*, 131), counteracting any philosophy that suggests that man can exist and act in isolation from a community (e.g., Kierkegaard’s high-minded and solitary religious commitment). *Third*, the desire to meet our desires with others is a sign that we were made for companionship (*IPO*, 93). The heart of the human person is intrinsically structured for self-giving and receiving (“[...] *ci definisce come uomini, stabilisce una «appartenenza»*”) (*IPO*, 93). And the concept of charity also stems from this principle (*IPO*, 126-127, 128).

### Formal Restatement of Giussani’s Thesis

To conclude, truth marks the difference between real freedom and false freedom, and the essence of false freedom is immediacy: the inability to raise one’s eyes from this world (*l’aldiqua*) to “the beyond” (*l’aldilà*) (*IPO*, 123). Nevertheless, one acts out of the impetus to fulfill the heart’s desires – an impetus provoked by objects in this world, which attract and so direct our attention. In taking a certain course of action, the surprising fact is observed that truth, beauty, justice, etc. alone satisfy the heart. But since John 8:32 holds true, the relation of truth, beauty, justice, etc. to satisfaction occurs as a matter of course. Hence, there is reason to take satisfaction as the litmus test of freedom (*IPO*, 114) and the heart as a compass for moral action (*IPO*, 92). At this point, Giussani posits the infinite, interchangeable with the word God, as the ultimate ground of human action *de natura* (*IPO*, 127-128). It is because man’s structure demands the infinite that God is “necessary” (*IPO*, 18). Only in a rapport with God, then, is social action truly liberating and coincident with the standard of what it means to be human (*IPO*, 18, 105). Far from being an obstacle which hinders action, a rapport with God multiplies possibilities, improving the effectiveness of human intervention. Freedom based on ultimate satisfaction, therefore, counteracts the alternative point of view that one’s assent to the proposition that God exists circumscribes and diminishes the field of legitimate and coherent action (*IPO*, 114). For this reason, Giussani asks secular governments to roll back, allowing religious belief and practice to have free reign, and for the



talent and generosity of individuals to take root in local communities toward the creation of dwelling more adequate to the heart.

### DEEPER PLAIN-SENSE READING

In this section, I will reconstruct Giussani's thesis as the answer to a question about the significance of John 8:32 for civil society. I use a set of artificial categories: integralism, dehumanization, essential humanity, the acting person, and truth, which I extrapolate from his sources.

#### *Integralism*

Giussani's disappointment with philosophers affected certain choices he made in constructing his account of freedom. Above all, Giussani was disappointed in the way philosophers had handled, or had failed to handle, the day-to-day run of the mill concerns that mattered to people and that inevitably touch on questions of freedom and authority. The tendency to abstraction, however, manifested itself on all sides: on the one hand, the deliveries of Neoscholasticism, the dominant mode of philosophical thinking in the Church, resembled "the exposition, highly abstract and syllogistic, of a set of quasi-Euclidian theorems;"<sup>20</sup> on the other hand, the trajectory of modern philosophy, from Descartes through Kant, ended in nothingness: "today philosophy is built on nothingness, that is, it is constructed as the affirmation of nothingness (which even as a proposition or definition is contradictory) (AC, 26)."<sup>21</sup> For this reason, at a decisive meeting in 1968, where priests gathered at Subiaco to formulate a pastoral response to the student riots that swept through universities, Giussani called for "a new structure of man, a new ontology that signifies a change in [the conception] of relations; a new relation, a new conception and way of using of things."<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 12.

<sup>21</sup> Giussani is here quoting Cornelio Fabro, *God in Exile: A Study of the Internal Dynamic of Modern Atheism, from Its Roots in the Cartesian Cogito to the Present Day*, Arthur Gibson, tr. (New York: The Newman Press, 1968). Originally published as *Introduzione all'Ateismo Moderno* (Rome: Editrice Studium, 1964). For a similar example, see Giussani, "La coscienza religiosa nell'uomo moderno," in *Il senso di Dio*, 97.

<sup>22</sup> "Ipotesi per una interpretazione e valorizzazione del Movimento Studentesco all'interno del movimento di comunione," Subiaco, September 1968. Manuscript from Archivio di Comunione e Liberazione, Via Nicola Antonio Porpora, 127, Milan.

Giussani's training in theology at Venegono through the 1940s had already put him within reach of a "new ontology." In those years, interest had been growing around certain Catholic philosophers – not without suspicion of modernism and considerable controversy – whose thought seemed capable of engaging an ever more secularized audience. The success of their writings involved using an existential and personalist approach to expound, if not to recover, the essential thought of Thomas Aquinas. One of the favourites at Venegono seems to have been Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), which is perhaps surprising given the highly controversial nature of his thought until the Second Vatican Council.<sup>23</sup> In an article on Blondel published from Venegono in 1936, Carlo Colombo quoted with admiration a passage that illustrates the possibilities afforded by a new philosophical vision. The passage can be seen as laying out the philosophical programme he recommended to his own seminarians, including Giussani:

In order that philosophy may be applied not only to possibilities, or essences, or concepts, but to all real things found in the concrete; that it be able to speak to our experience and shape the history of actual people; that the example and practice of Christianity be known and lived to the utmost, producing a philosophical surcharge that can be assimilated to ideas, sentiments, aspirations, of which a state of life can be born (*il est bon de faire état*) [...]. Let the subtleties of sentiment, different kinds of heroism, types of suffering enrich human consciousness and make us take advantage of moral encouragement and the gentleness of grace.<sup>24</sup>

The purpose of Blondel's philosophical programme, according to John Macquarrie, was to point out God's relevance to daily life, and thus "to turn the attention of the apologist or pastor from abstract, metaphysical thought to actual experience in all its fullness and richness."<sup>25</sup> Just as Blondel spoke of a "human-divine synthesis in this

---

<sup>23</sup> Blondel's philosophy was indicted on several modernist charges, from immanentism, through extrinsicism, to integralism. Years later, reflecting on Blondel's influence, Giussani down-played the violence of the controversy: "There was still some doubt regarding Blondel [through the years of my seminary training], but there were also already positive appraisals regarding aspects of his work: for example, the idea of the historical nature of man (*la natura storica dell'uomo*) being open as such to the supernatural" ("La «Scuola di Venegono» (1935-1955)," in *Annuario* [Milan: ISTRAS 1984], 132). For additional sources on Blondel's indictment, see my *Chapter One: Judgement*.

<sup>24</sup> Blondel, "Pour la philosophie intégrale" in *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie* 37 (1934): 49-64; here 62. (My translation). Also quoted by Carlo Colombo in "Intorno alla 'Filosofia Cristiana'" in *Rivista di filosofia neo-scholastica* 28.6 (November 1936), 510-517; here 515-516, footnote 1.

<sup>25</sup> John Macquarrie, "Blondel, Maurice" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Volume 1, edited by Paul Edwards (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1967), 327.

world,” Giussani worked through various examples to illustrate a human-divine connection in daily life: “I am a Christian because I cannot conceive of my faith apart from life’s challenges [*vicende della vita*]; and nothing is more correspondent, more adequate, in terms of a response, than that which can galvanize all my energies through the events of life, such as my faith (*IPO*, 137).” The attempt to recover the relevance of religion to daily life, however, did not arise initially from pragmatic concerns, but from epistemological questions pertaining to the pure act of faith. Given both authors’ aversion to rationalist philosophy and moralism, a preamble of faith was sought in the natural world and the concept of humanity (cf. *RVU*, 183). The strategy, which came to be known as “integralism,” involved either “naturalizing the supernatural,” as exhibited by German theologians, or “supernaturalizing the natural,” as exhibited by the French, including Blondel.<sup>26</sup>

The concept of freedom, in Blondel’s strain of integralism, is bound up dialectically with the subject’s relation to Infinity. As Macquarrie points out, for Blondel “human action is already directed beyond the phenomenal order. To will all that we do will is already to have the action of God within us. Yet this quest for realization would be a fascinating one were it not that God in turn moves toward us in transcendence, and human action is supported and supplemented by divine grace.”<sup>27</sup> Freedom, on account of this relation, has three terms: the immanent (Giussani’s “impact with the real,” *RS*, 108), the transcendent (Giussani’s “Mystery”), and the human-divine synthesis (Giussani’s concept “I am You-who-make-me” concretely manifested in “realistic and incisive social works” directed to “the needs that man lives in the present,” *IPO*, 131”). The subject’s posture in this relation is fundamentally self-reflexive: “As we come to define better for ourselves what we are not [...] through a more complete experience and a more penetrating

<sup>26</sup> John Milbank defines integralism as “the view that in concrete, historical humanity there is no such thing as a state of ‘pure nature’: rather, every person has always been worked upon by divine grace, with the consequence that one cannot analytically separate ‘natural’ and ‘supernatural’ contributions to this integral unity.” Milbank then discusses the sources for this shift, citing, Maurice Blondel: “Broadly speaking, there were two sources for this momentous change: a French source which derived from the *nouvelle théologie* and such thinkers as de Montcheuil and de Lubac, but more ultimately from Maurice Blondel; and a German source, meaning, primarily, the thought of Karl Rahner. [...] I shall contend that there is a drastic difference between the two versions of integralism [...]: the French version ‘supernaturalizes the natural’ and the German version ‘naturalizes the supernatural.’” (*Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* [Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1990], 206-207).

<sup>27</sup> Macquarrie, “Blondel, Maurice,” in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 327.

reflexion, we come to see more clearly that without which we would not be.”<sup>28</sup> In running up against limits in our action we come to realize our dependency on someone greater than ourselves, who in the long run of enquiry turns out to be God (*IPO*, 107). “The thought of God within depends on our action in two ways,” Blondel proposed. “On the one hand, it is because in acting we find an infinite disproportion in ourselves that we are constrained to look to infinity for the equation of our action. On the other hand, it is because in affirming absolute perfection we do not ever arrive at equalling our own affirmation, that we are constrained to look for its complement and commentary in action. The problem that action raises, only action can resolve.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly for Giussani, human action is always already directed beyond the phenomenal order: Freedom is man’s rapport with the Infinite-Other addressed personally as Thou – a Thou that is encountered not only in the beyond, but in the immanent sphere of ordinary life (*IPO*, 104).

### *Dehumanization*

Giussani defines freedom predominantly from the stance of *freedom from*. The story he tells is effectively a critique of power (*il potere*) provoked by the problem of oppression and dehumanization, so Giussani says. Power, of course, is a vague term that can denote anything from the brute force of nature, through the exercise of legitimate authority, to the Promethean struggle to be greater than God. Giussani’s preoccupation with oppression touches on the latter’s relation to power. The problem of oppression, more precisely, occurs when the Promethean struggle extends to government. Here, Giussani quotes John Paul II on the invention and use of military and technological power.<sup>30</sup> He also quotes Romano Guardini on the modern attempt to subsume persons and the natural world into systems: ““When we examine the development of [the modern world] as a whole, we cannot escape the

<sup>28</sup> Maurice Blondel, *Action* (1893). *Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, translated by Olivia Blanchette (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 322.

<sup>29</sup> Blondel, *Action* (1893), 324.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. “In spite of ‘humanistic’ declarations [...] contemporary man, therefore, fears that by the use of the means invented by this type of society, individuals and the environment, communities, societies and nations can fall victim to the abuse of power by other individuals, environments and societies. The history of our century offers many examples of this. In spite of all the declarations on the rights of man in his integral dimension, that is to say in his bodily and spiritual existence, we cannot say that these examples belong only to the past” (John Paul II, *Dives in misericordia*, Encyclical on the Mercy of God [Vatican City: 1980. Numerous editions.], §11; quoted in *IPO*, 11).

impression that nature as well as man himself is becoming ever more vulnerable to the domination – economic, technical, political, organizational – of power. Ever more distinctly our condition reveals itself as one in which man progressively controls nature, yes, but also men; the state controls the citizens; and an autonomous technical-economic political system holds all life in thrall.”<sup>31</sup> Giussani’s critique of political power, going further than Guardini’s, attacks overreliance on structures derived from Marx (*IPO*, 86) and futuristic hope derived from Bloch (*IPO*, 20, 175), which subordinate tradition, personal conscience, and social responsibility of the many under the *a priori* agenda of a dominant and enlightened few.

At base level, the Promethean struggle – “man as the measure of all things (*WC*, 51)” – is posed as a universal problem that can only be explained by original sin (*AL*, 188). Its predominant manifestation, however, occurs in “the pretence of science, viz., man’s unlimited possibility of discovery, which becomes the pretence to eliminate God (*AL*, 188).” According to Giussani, “the blasphemous presumption [of science] finds its osmotic conjugation in all men. For this reason, the use of scientific power and of knowledge tends to be identified with political power (*AL*, 188).” When science and knowledge are given the ultimate say on the meaning and purpose of life, political power readily associates itself with them to establish its own grounds for authority. The wholesale accommodation of governments to science and social science is in fact the adscription to a highly determinist anthropology that reduces the person to little more “the sum total of his biological, chemical and physical antecedents [*antecedenti biologici chimici e fisici*] (*IPO*, 53).” Applied to real problems, this determinism attributes evil not to “the misuse of freedom,” but to “the situation in which man finds himself, which man can escape by means of a progressive mechanisation [*un progressivo meccanismo*] (*RG*, 135).” The slogan of the CDO – *Meno stato, più società!* – a constant refrain through *IPO*, asks governments to roll back in order that individuals may assume responsibility for the moral shaping of society, but this itself results from the stance that man is not manufactured. “To treat society as a machine, oppressing man and exasperating the

---

<sup>31</sup> “Power and Responsibility,” in *The End of the Modern World*, translated by Elinor C. Briefs and Henry Regnery (1956, 1961; Wilmington, DE: ISI Books, 1998), 163. Originally published as *Ende der Neuzeit* (1950). Italian edition “Il potere,” in *La fine dell’epoca moderna* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 1993).

consciousness of freedom, impedes the necessary realization of the ideal of progress and justice (*RG*, 134).”

Behind the problem of power lies a false conception of the ideal of progress and justice. According to Guardini, power and progress go hand-in-hand when “we create our own world, shaped by thoughts and controlled not merely by natural urges but by ends that we set to serve ourselves as intellectual and spiritual beings, an environment that is related to us and brought into being by us.”<sup>32</sup> The ravaging effects of progress were everywhere present in Giussani’s native Lombardy, where industrialization, incidentally, had also provoked Guardini’s excoriation of technology – known to Giussani through Guardini’s famous *Letters from Lake Como*.<sup>33</sup> The economic and technological revolution that followed the Second World War had transformed Lombardy from a relatively agrarian culture to Italy’s leading region in finance and manufacturing. The new demands of industry and commerce caused rural habitants to migrate to Milan, where bourgeois humanism posed a direct threat to the more provincially-minded Catholicism of the pre-war era.<sup>34</sup> The rise of political activism among the youth of Catholic Action (GIAC) and Giussani’s own *Gioventù Studentesca*, along with the interventions of the Holy See both to regulate the position of the Church in the Italian State<sup>35</sup> and to address the technological

---

<sup>32</sup> Romano Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como: Exploration in Technology and the Human Race*, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (1981; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), 10.

<sup>33</sup> Originally published as *Die Technik und der Mensch. Briefe vom Comer See* (Mainz 1927); Italian edition *Lettere dal lago di Como: la tecnica e l'uomo*. Various editions.

<sup>34</sup> For the rise of Catholic Action amid rapid advances in technology, and its effect on Italy’s economy and social fabric see Guido Forgmigoni and Giorgio Vecchio, “Tra rilancio e difficoltà di fronte al cambiamento sociale,” in *L’azione cattolica nel Milano del novecento* (Milan: Rusconi, 1989), 124-136. Cf. Paul Ginborg, “Economic Miracle: Rural Exodus and Social Transformation 1958-63,” in *A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980* (London: Penguin, 1980), 210-253. For an account of the labour market in Lombardy and its establishment as one of the great industrial centres of Europe see Massimo Paci, *Mercato del lavoro e classi sociali* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1973), 89 and 92-3.

<sup>35</sup> The interventions undertaken by the Holy See sought within the Italian State to secure the continuing autonomy of the Church in the administration of welfare activities and compulsory religious education in state schools, as agreed in the Lateran Pacts of 1929.

revolution,<sup>36</sup> account for the thematic prominence of freedom in Catholic theological reflection through the 1960s.<sup>37</sup>

The first approach to the problem of freedom takes shape around nostalgia; the second, building on the first, around the recovery of what was lost. Giussani often expressed his lament as a nostalgia for beauty – natural beauty, artistic beauty, even the beauty of a dream – which he often conveyed through the words of his favourite authors: Leopardi, Pascoli, Péguy, Arendt, Miłosz, Eliot, and Pavese; or otherwise through music: Pergolesi, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Chopin, Dvořák, and Rachmaninov.<sup>38</sup> Reflecting nostalgically in Leopardi's voice, he writes: “If you are that beauty which, when I was young, I believed I could find in the streets...; if you are that beauty, that idea of Plato which lives in the *Hyper Uranus*, ... or perhaps you live on some other planet happier than earth, ... why do you not condescend to robe yourself in the garments of the flesh?”<sup>39</sup> That which passed for progress during the industrial revolution and beyond severed the link between man and nature and left a totally artificial substitute in its place. A dwelling more adequate to the heart was lost. As Guardini put it: “Once there was an order, a living space, which made possible a human existence in a specific sense. We can no longer be seafarers in the first and special sense in which seafaring is a basic form of human existence filled with its own content. The crew members of a liner are not essentially different from employees on the assembly line of a factory.”<sup>40</sup> The dawn of the new Dark Ages,

<sup>36</sup> Concerns of Pius XII relate to “false opinions threatening to undermine the foundations of Catholic Doctrine,” as outlined in the Encyclical *Humani Generis* (August 12, 1950), and the dangers of the technological revolution itself, as outlined both in the Encyclical *Le Pelerinage de Lourdes* (July 2, 1957), warning against materialism, and the Encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* (September 8, 1957), concerning the communication fields: motion pictures, radio, television.

<sup>37</sup> It is interesting that two formidable influences on Giussani, Archbishop Carlo Colombo (Giussani's former seminary professor) and Cardinal Karol Wojtyła (later Pope John Paul II), made decisive interventions on religious freedom at the Second Vatican Council. For Colombo's intervention, see *Acta synodalia Concilii oecumenici Vaticani II*, vol. 3, part 2, 554-557. For Wojtyła's interventions, see *Acta synodalia Concilii oecumenici Vaticani II*, vol 3, part 2, 530-532; cf vol. 4. part 2, 11-13. John Paul II also outlined the relationship between the Church and the secular public sphere, particularly *en face* of the challenges posed to humanity by the technological revolution, in *Laborem Exercens*, Encyclical on Human Work on the Ninetieth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* (Vatican City, 1981). Numerous editions.

<sup>38</sup> Massimo Camisasca, *Don Giussani: La sua esperienza dell'uomo e di Dio* (Cinisello-Balsamo, Milan: Edizioni San Paolo, 2009), 19.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. “Alla sua donna,” in *Giacomo Leopardi: Canti*, edited by Niccolò Calò and Cesare Garboli (Turin: Einaudi, 1962), 143-148; paraphrased by Giussani in “La coscienza religiosa di fronte alla poesia di Leopardi,” in *Cara beltà... Poesie* (Milan, BUR, 2007), 23-24. (My translation).

<sup>40</sup> Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 14.

which MacIntyre describes in a key passage of *IPO*, coincides with Guardini's assessment, half-a-century earlier, of the modern predicament: "The sphere in which we live is becoming more and more artificial, less and less human, more and more – I cannot help saying it – barbarian."<sup>41</sup>

### *Essential Humanity*

The other side of barbarism is the recovery of a "pure humanity." For Giussani, the recovery is a matter of uncovering the personality, the true "I." Giussani emphatically insists, at different points through his bibliography, that what he means by "uncovering" differs from what is meant by the same term in psychology. Giussani taught his interlocutors to frame questions concerning identity around two goals. As summarized by a former pupil: "In the first place, the capacity to cultivate a position regarding my 'I' through which the radicality [demanded by faith] might be possible, viz., a capacity for that simplicity with which I might recognize the datum in respect of which I decide, and therefore, also take a stance on [the value] of our companionship; secondly, [...] to cultivate a description of our companionship, a climate that fosters freedom, in order that anyone who joins us will be confronted not by [charismatic] personalities, but by a people oriented to the truth (*CGC*, 194)."

The answer, Giussani believes, lies in the personality, which is at once a way of conceiving the self, of generating self-understanding, of living out a fundamental decision [to believe] from a stance taken on affection for one's own humanity (*sentimento di sé*). While some brands of psychology elude Giussani's description of the "I," it is hard to grasp the implications of his account without acknowledging the presuppositions on which modern psychology rests, such as those described by Guardini:

We think of the new research into the bordering territories of bodily and intellectual happenings, the sharp discussion aimed at grasping the puzzling level on which these happenings interact. We think also of psychoanalysis, which has discovered beneath the sphere of the soul – which has claimed almost exclusive attention thus far – a further sphere of which only masters of the life of the soul, artists and others, have been aware. [...] It has brought to light a new sphere of the living soul and has indicated profound relationships.

---

<sup>41</sup> Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 17.



[...] Take also the discipline of religious psychology. Here wide fields have come into the light of public consciousness that previously were purely inward. Facts and relations are now open that once were hidden.<sup>42</sup>

Guardini's concept of the "I," like Giussani's, delves inward in order to climb upward. Both authors draw on a pre-Wittgensteinian insight concerning personality-development, which holds that the self and culture are the courageous and mature externalization of the inner "I." The upward motion is the expression of a "new self," the courage to say "I" (*il coraggio di dire io*), which comes to be embodied, ultimately, in forms of culture, and is essentially "the art of bringing everything into a possible relationship that is also essentially the right one (*IPO*, 99)."<sup>43</sup>

The right relationship on the basis of which culture is founded presupposes the harmonization of nature and humanity: "Perhaps the word 'culture' is the best word for considering [the harmonization of factors in a nation]," Giussani writes. "A culture ties the particular to the universal; a position is 'cultured' if it tends to tie the passing moment with the total horizon of things (thus, by its nature, every culture should strive to be catholic, universal; otherwise it is not a real culture) [*IPO*, 126]." On account of harmonization, a "simple gesture of solidarity, which originates reactively from the goodness of human nature, ties itself to something more vast, it becomes assimilated to and redirected by a vaster horizon (*IPO*, 126)." Guardini expresses the same idea through the word *urbanitas*: "[...] this word means strictly 'city living,' a city atmosphere, yet one in which a nobly shaped humanity can flourish. Here nature can pass over smoothly into culture. There is nothing alien or antithetical to culture that must wither away if this humanity, this *urbanitas*, this art of living is to come to being. I cannot find a way to express how human this nature is and how we feel in it the possibility of being human in a totally clear but inexhaustibly profound sense."<sup>44</sup> The only reason to infuse culture with more than purely instrumental purpose – i.e., the only reason to consider transcendence as its ultimate goal – is for external action to coincide with the inner dynamic of human person. This inner dynamic necessarily predisposes the person to the proposition that

---

<sup>42</sup> Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 28.

<sup>43</sup> Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 37.

<sup>44</sup> Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 6.

God exists, which obviously makes a difference to one's self-conception and one's conception of society.

The restoration of culture, then, rests on securing what Guardini refers to as "the purest humanity."<sup>45</sup> The retrieval of what it means foundationally to be human is similarly important in Giussani's concept of freedom: "The concreteness of life is given by the concept of person, because it is the person that gives a global sense to all of man's needs, what they are and their unity (*IPO*, 86)." Applied to the concept of freedom, the idea of person must act "to realize one's humanity, to fulfil his calling to be a person which is his by reason of his very humanity (*IPO*, 92),"<sup>46</sup> independent of the objective content of the creative act, the burden of labour, or the inevitable sacrifice this demands.

### *The Acting Person*

Giussani firmly holds to the rule that a person discovers herself in terms of her ultimate relation to God only through action (*in actu exercito*) (*IPO*, 144). This thesis, attributed by Giussani to Thomas,<sup>47</sup> coincides with John Paul II's notion of the acting person, expounded in *IPO* through the social encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (1981) [On Human Work] (*IPO*, 92), which also happens to be coincident with Giussani's earlier grounding in Blondel's ontology acquired at Venegono through Colombo's promotion of *Action* (1893). The actor in Wojtyla's notion of the acting person, like the actor in Blondel's, is not primarily someone in whom something happens (from the Latin *pati*); rather, he is someone who acts (from the Latin *agere*). The concept of action that sees the person as efficacious in seeking a resolution to problems is essential to the aims of the CDO, Giussani insists.<sup>48</sup> The so-called acting person, with respect to these aims, serves as "a litmus test for the possibility of true human participation by the individual human person in economic and social

<sup>45</sup> Guardini, *Letters from Lake Como*, 15.

<sup>46</sup> Giussani is quoting John Paul II, *Laborem Exercens*, §6.

<sup>47</sup> Giussani quotes Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 10, art. 8: "[...] *in hoc [enim] aliquis percipit se animam habere et vivere et esse, quod percipit se sentire et intelligere et alia huiusmodi opera vitae exercere.*" [One perceives oneself as having a soul and as living and as being inasmuch as one perceives oneself as feeling and understanding and exercising other similar tasks related to life]. (My translation).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. John McNerney, *John Paul II: Poet and Philosopher* (New York: T&T Clark Ltd, 2004), 107.

systems.”<sup>49</sup> In other words, the acting person is a concept that casts into relief forms of alienation which result from mechanization, structuralization, and similar manifestations of progress achieved on determinist grounds.

A decisive statement of the importance of the notion of action to the safeguarding of humanity, resonant with the epigraph I quoted at the head of this chapter, is found in John Paul II’s “Milan Essay,” deployed by McNerney as the “hermeneutical key” to *Laborem Exercens*:

[...] whatever we make in our action, whatever effects or products we bring about in it, we always simultaneously ‘make ourselves’ in it as well (if I may be permitted to put it thus). We express ourselves, we in some way shape ourselves, we in a certain sense ‘create’ ourselves. In acting, we actualize ourselves, we fulfill ourselves. We bring to a certain – albeit partial fulfillment (*actus*) both what and who we are potentially (*in potentia*). From the perspective of experience and phenomenological insight, this is the meaning of the term action in the category of *actus: actus humanus*.<sup>50</sup>

Three canons follow from this assertion, all of which sustain Giussani’s freedom-narrative in *IPO*: *First*, the embedded and embodied individual experiences himself as a self-determining *I*, and experiences the other as another *I*. *Second*, the concept of the embedded and embodied individual introduces in the economic sphere a primitive concept of personhood that corrects the inevitable alienation of Marxian structures and programmes.<sup>51</sup> *Third*, human action has an effect within the person, as well as outside the person. The actor is not passive, simply allowing himself to be affected by the passing show, but active, efficacious in seeking solutions, improving conditions, constructing a home more adequate to the heart. That is why sadness, dissatisfaction, running up against the limits of progress are integral to the leap of faith. The importance of action, ultimately, concerns belief in God. And since the appeal to religion could not be made on moral grounds, Giussani thought – for that would unduly impose extraneous limitations on freedom – he proceeds to make it on

<sup>49</sup> Maciej Zieba, *The Surprising Pope: Understanding the Thought of John Paul II*, translated by Karolina Weening (New York: Seabury Press, 1981), 24

<sup>50</sup> Karol Wojtyła, “The Problem of the Constitution of Culture Through Human Praxis,” in *Person and Community: Selected Essays*, translated by Theresa Sandok, OSM (Catholic Thought from Lublin: Peter Lang, 1993), 266, 267; quoted in McNerney, *John Paul II: Poet and Philosopher*, 141.

<sup>51</sup> For an analogous repair of the Marxian emphasis on “what could be called the social structures of our social existence” see Wojtyła, *Participation or Alienation*, 205.

humanitarian, anthropological, and psychological grounds. Doctrine, therefore, may be *rationally* and *affectively* appropriated by the individual, who is an actor motivated by the primitive desire for truth.

### *Truth*

The condition of freedom, truth, is realized through two factors, according to Giussani, viz., epistemology and community. In terms of epistemology, truth is the achievement of the self-reflective “I’s” affirmation of the conditions for self-discovery and development (and not the tendency to follow personal predilection or the herd mentality). The epistemological argument runs something like this: The basic need for truth, justice, beauty, joy, and the like, is a structural need of the human person (*IPO*, 139). At the core of this hypothesis lies the idea of predicating the essence of an object through an intuitive, almost instinctual, sense of its value vis-à-vis the person’s structural needs. The word “correspondence” denotes the satisfaction delivered by an object with respect to these needs. The predication of reality, consequently, follows a heuristic method: the inquiring subject tests for a correspondence by judging the value of an experience or encounter against the objective standards of the heart. First, all problems and questions arising in ordinary life are interpreted in the light of the fundamental desire for fullness or satisfaction (the religious sense). Then, through a process of elimination, the inquirer moves from one hypothesis to another until he has found the ultimate answer to the question of human satisfaction, viz., God. The underlying premise here is that there cannot be an adequate response to a real problem that does not take infinity as the basic ground of human action. The awareness of infinity, which signals the subject’s structural relation to God, deepens or enriches one’s predication of reality, thus marking a distinction between true and false predication, rendering all responses as coincident with the truth.

The immanent provokes reflection on the infinite and awaits the subject’s return to action (the affairs of family and state) after her reorientation to the truth (cf. *IPO*, 107). Action that proceeds from the awareness of the self-in-relation-to-infinity has been grounded in “a love for humanity, an esteem and affection for the human person fully alive” (rather than in rational obeisance to law or some claim to

objectivity). The ethical life, where decision and action take root, founds itself on a prior moment of conviction, a belief about morality and doctrine. Three corollaries follow: (i) Governments are to interpret their role in society with respect to a correct anthropology (viz., Giussani's epistemology), and to intervene only when the absence of human or material resources impedes the realization of projects that foster a dwelling adequate to that same anthropology (*IPO*, 175-76); (ii) The journey to truth is an experience, which, undertaken with courage, produces positive results for identity (*sei protagonista di te stesso* [you are the protagonist of your own becoming]), making one mature approaching life and its challenges. The journey is decisive in consolidating the *I* and integrating it with other elements of the tradition and culture into which one is born; (iii) An adequate response to human problems must take stock of the religious factor(s) within human experience, viz., that God exists to be found and that we are innately oriented to seek Him.

Giussani's epistemology, while geared to achieve the deepest level of religious commitment and action from his interlocutors, complete with a full account of the concomitant results on personality, maturity, and character, does not want to achieve its ends by relativizing the community. Giussani's subject, in other words, who in so many ways resembles Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith, is not in every way the paradigm of the solitary individual *contra mundum*. And yet, adherence to truth may pit the subject against the common mentality (which flinches from its light), landing him in the most vulnerable of predicaments. But the role of the "communital phenomenon" comes into play precisely at this moment: to accompany, support, and encourage the subject in the same manner that the CDO sustains the charitable works of its members. Indeed, Giussani's subject is embedded and embodied in "a companionship" from which he receives the strength, courage, and moral wherewithal to speak and act in the name of the truth.

The "communital phenomenon" also helps the individual actor undertake sacrifice and suffering for the good of a project insofar as the community's survival depends on it. The very concept of a nation, for which so many have died throughout history, can be traced back to the same collective sense of what really matters. As Blondel writes: "attachment to the countryside, to the steeple, the home,

prepares and warms the heart for love of the broad country (*la grande patrie*).”<sup>52</sup> Attachment rooted in the heart, “belonging to someone or something,” as Giussani puts it, is the necessary precondition for action insofar as action is to be infused with more than a purely instrumental purpose. And so there is a second source, in addition to the heart, from which we may retrieve the conditions adequate for the “I’s” dwelling, namely the community. For this reason, obedience to the Magisterium, the official teaching-voice of the Church, is indispensable as a litmus test of fidelity to the truth (communion) (*IPO*, 178, 189). Indispensable, too, is the importance given to human relationality as an ontological reality, as evidenced, for Giussani, in the fact that “being human dictates that desires, needs, and exigencies be met in association with others (*IPO*, 102).” Here, Giussani touches on the concept of *communio*, which had been a key feature of the Jesuit Thomism he was taught and was given renewed emphasis with John Paul II: “The concept *communio* does not refer just to something in common, to community as a certain effect or even expression of the being and acting of persons. It refers rather to the very mode of being and acting of those persons, which is made of being and acting in mutual relation to one another (not just ‘in common’ with one another) such that through this being and acting they mutually confirm and affirm one another as persons.”<sup>53</sup> Giussani’s own version of the I-You relation, as expounded, for instance, in his accounts of friendship (i.e., «*Tu*», *o del amicizia*), draws support from the same concept of *communio*.<sup>54</sup> It is through the community’s own orientation to God, and its inability to replace God, above all, that the individual realizes she was made for so much more – she was made for infinity.

### LEADING TENDENCIES

The aim of this section is to accentuate the unique features of Giussani’s account of freedom by creating some contrast with other authors. I intend to test the areas of difference, in particular, as potentially generating vagueness and incoherence.

---

<sup>52</sup> Blondel, *Action* (1893), 253.

<sup>53</sup> Wojtyla, *Person and Community*, 321.

<sup>54</sup> See Robert Di Pede, “Luigi Giussani on the Notion of Christian Friendship,” in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 14.1 (2011): 91-121.

*Cartesian/Kantian tendencies* are practices an author exhibits in referring the problems he is addressing to the cognitive act of verification and judgement. Giussani adopts these practices for his account of freedom and makes John 8:32 its central axiom. Since it is at times easier to say what something is in terms of what it is not, and for the purposes of contrast, I have chosen to read Giussani's epistemology alongside Robert Spaemann's account of freedom in *Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'*.<sup>55</sup> I proceed on the basis of a basic compatibility between these two authors. Spaemann and Giussani, both contemporaries and well-formed Catholics, have played important roles in academic circles at the Vatican. As the CL magazine *Tracce* has pointed out, they also seem to be working in similar areas of enquiry: religion, culture, politics, and ethics, drawing on the same philosophical sources of the Catholic intellectual tradition, such as Aristotle, Plato, Augustine and Thomas, to formulate robust answers to contemporary problems.<sup>56</sup> In the realm of freedom, both authors are motivated by the need to repair the individualist separation of truth from freedom. Adhering to John 8:32, Giussani and Spaemann formulate arguments that restore God's transcendence to society and secure the individual's existential decision to live according to the practices of the community so that obedience may be thoughtful obedience.

The one difference that separates these men is what makes them indispensable to each other: Spaemann works as a professional philosopher and addresses an academic audience; Giussani works as a pastor and educator, engaging younger

---

<sup>55</sup> Robert Spaemann (1927- ) is a contemporary moral philosopher working within the Catholic tradition who draws on the heritage of ancient and medieval philosophy, as well as on Scripture, which have all been largely neglected in philosophy since the Enlightenment. He is considered a leading philosopher in his field and enjoys the approval of prominent members of the Roman Curia. For instance, *Moderne oder Postmoderne? Zur Signatur des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters* (Weinheim, 1986), edited by Spaemann *et al.*, is cited in Walter Kasper's 1988 *Père Marquette Lecture in Theology* (pg. 4, footnote 8); and Josef Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), on the occasion of Spaemann's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday, dedicated to Spaemann *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik. Neue Versuche zur Ekklesiologie* (Einsiedeln, 1987): "Robert Spaemann zum 60. Geburtstag zugeeignet." Many of his books, originally published in German, are not yet available in English. All references to Spaemann in this thesis are from *Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and 'Something'*, translated by Oliver O'Donovan, ed. (1996; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 197-220.

<sup>56</sup> Lorenzo Fazzini, "Spaemann: Chi si sbarazza di Dio nega la verità di questo istante," in *Tracce: Rivista internazionale di Comunione e Liberazione* 9 (October 2009): 12.

generations of Catholics and Catholics whose faith needs stronger intellectual underpinnings. Whereas Giussani uses a quite untheoretical apparatus to expound freedom, Spaemann is aware of its philosophical genealogy and has a more finely-tuned sense of the conclusions to which certain lines of logic lead. Spaemann is able, therefore, to reason from premise to conclusion, avoiding conceptual pitfalls and faulty logic, offering the kind of account he believes supports the definition of freedom according to John's text. Giussani, by and large, is able to do the same drawing on materials from the same categories – albeit less systematically. At certain theoretical junctures, however, Giussani takes different turns and pursues different lines of argument. In a subsequent section, I will refer the features of Giussani's account back to his original question and the history and context from which it arose. For the time being, my purpose is to use Spaemann's account as a diagnostic tool in order to identify areas of difference with precision and to allow the contrast to bring Giussani's accentuations and their effects on clarity and coherence into plain view. To this end, I organize pertinent materials under two categories: personalism and intuitions.

## Analysis

### (i) *Personalism*

When it comes to deciding and acting autonomously, particularly along self-determining lines, both Giussani and Spaemann find it important to explore what the idea of person adds to the idea of freedom. The question is framed in terms of whether individual freedom should turn on the axis of choice or whether there is some other principle, higher and more worthy of respect, by which acts of the will can be determined. The predominant mentality in their own contexts would likely settle the matter on choice, for choice favours self-interest, and self-interest would seem to carry implications for vitality and autonomy. Certainly, there is no reason to attack choice on its own grounds, for a vital self-interest serves both natural and morally neutral ends. A difference is marked, however, between living and flourishing. The latter relates to serious reflection on *who I am* and *what I want fundamentally*, all of which can “direct my attention to an object, fill my imagination



with it, regardless of life's necessities, and concentrate more protractedly on it than I would have done without a definite resolve (*IPO*, 219)." Reflective self-evaluation on my identity, then, would seem to have the capacity to enable me to turn attention from myself to someone or something else, not because self-reflection carries with it a store of energy, but because of who I am fundamentally and the response that the person or thing demands in itself and in that light. Reflection on the self and on the object is what makes the alternative to self-interest possible. But only a carefully wrought description of self-reflection will preserve both the validity of a naturally-given vital self-concern, on the one hand, and its submission in certain cases to a moral imperative also given by nature, on the other hand.

Both Spaemann and Giussani agree that love – rather than self-fulfilment and moral obedience – is the alternative to egoism. The will must be moved by an Other, and the achievement of reason is modest in comparison with those operations that countermand and replace concrete acts of the will. Nevertheless, ideas, if not the ideals, are what our hearts attend to. What I am able to know about *who I am* and *what I want fundamentally* is crucial to judging the worthiness of action. As a higher court may overturn the decision of the lower court, bringing into view what was previously overlooked (Spaemann 220), so the "I" can challenge an action among different options, which while naturally inclined to care exclusively for the self, may still be persuaded by reason to act altruistically.

Since *who I am* and *what I want fundamentally* bears crucially on love, the intervention of reason toward self-giving simply reinforces the true "I." The "I" in relation to love operates like an instinct, at the level of first nature, both limiting autonomy and making it possible. The "I" makes my being unable to avoid willing some things and unable to will other things (Frankfurt). What comes up with the "I" is the content of what it means to be a person. That is why the idea of person is bound up with the idea of freedom and communion (Spaemann 197). And this differs importantly from other accounts of freedom which relate freedom of will to natural subjective interest. Freedom is not freedom to choose our identities, but freedom to act in certain ways because we are who we are. And our identities are given to us by God. As Spaemann puts it: "It is given that we are who we are, that we act in this or that way, and not in some other. What we do voluntarily is to act

within the frame of this horizon, this or that is what seems to us should be done, given that we are who we are. ‘Can’ is different from ‘must’: if all the conditions are met, it rests with us either to act or not to act. Persons are aware that they could have done things that they actually do not do.”<sup>57</sup>

Freedom of will is also related to the kind of interest that grabs our attention altruistically. The matter in question concerns cases where objects are the reason for the attention they attract. The term attention, in this sense, concerns our interest in the givenness of objects. In spite of any natural inclination to assert oneself over their presentment, the nature of the object invites the “I” to recognize a value that inheres in the object as important even at the risk of incurring a consequential inconvenience. The “I’s” receptivity to this givenness, come what may, is due not only to the fact that the interests of a particular human being are not in question with such an object, but on account of the kind of interest the object attracts. The character of that interest is selflessness. Spaemann brilliantly brings this into focus:

What kind of interest do we have in preserving the last tigers in Russia from extinction? We shall never see them anyway! What kind of interest moves an artist to labour at perfecting his masterpiece without thought for his strength or life expectancy, though hardly anybody, perhaps, will ever appreciate it? What kind of interest drives someone to keep a promise when there are attractive prospects in view, with nothing to stand in the way except the promise and the trust another has placed in it? What kind of interest makes a man, even on his deathbed when the deception is inconsequential, want to know the truth rather than accept the consolation of a well-intentioned lie?

What, then, is the nature of the interest that grabs the “I’s” attention in each of these cases where the object matters more than a natural subjective interest? In all such cases, the interest relates to the truth of the idea. Openness of the “I” to the object’s truth demands a letting go of autonomy, a renouncing of the natural demands of self-concern. This letting go, which is always a leap, is the condition of personal freedom.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, the truth of the idea could not have the mobilizing force it did were it not also for the primitive constitution of the person. Concerning the kind of constitution in question, Spaemann adopts Harry Frankfurt’s proposition, which is

---

<sup>57</sup> Spaemann, *Persons*, 213.

<sup>58</sup> Spaemann, *Persons*, 220.

also perfectly in line with Giussani's, viz., "the capacity [of persons] not merely to have desires, preferences, or motives (which capacity human beings share with animals) but to want to have (or not to have) certain desires, preferences, motives."<sup>59</sup> What we are inclined to seek at this level stems from our original identity as persons. In Giussani's account, this original identity is known as the heart. The idea of heart is bound up with the idea of freedom just as the idea of person is bound up with the idea of freedom. Both authors are able to agree insightfully with John 8:32 that we determine ourselves as persons only by acting in the light of truth.

(ii) *Intuitionism*

For Giussani the strongest case against every kind of determinism – mechanical, psychological, and historical – is the heart's incessant plea for satisfaction. The Greeks had referred to this as the longing for *eudaimonia*. Its logic requires that freedom not be reduced to selecting ends on a utility-calculus, but that each end be placed in a wider context of an overarching goal. For Christians, God is that goal. In Giussani's account, the fact that the plea for fullness only finds its answer in God is itself bound by a kind of necessity, for God put the desire for himself in us and only in God is every desire totally satisfied. Along the same lines, Blondel writes: "Under whatever form it presents itself before consciousness, the thought of God is brought there by a determinism that forces itself upon us: it springs necessarily from the dynamism of interior life, it necessarily has an effect; it has an immediate influence on the organization of our conduct. It is this necessary action of the necessary idea of God that we must determine: we shall see how the voluntary inevitably takes on a transcendent character, and how this necessity is the very expression of freedom."<sup>60</sup> What is necessary in the case of God, however, does not make one unfree. The encounter with God is always a gift, which one is able either to accept or reject. As one of Giussani's professors put it, citing Blondel's opinion on the matter: "the method of immanence will tend to demonstrate that man, faced with the supernatural, has the freedom to accept it, satisfying, by this means, the

---

<sup>59</sup> "Harry Frankfurt," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 311. Cf. Frankfurt, "Freedom of Will and the Concept of Person," in *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-20.

<sup>60</sup> Blondel, *Action* (1893), 324.

intimate exigency that lies within him of an ulterior order, or even to reject it, rendering himself, should this happen, responsible for his own acceptance or refusal of the help offered him.”<sup>61</sup> Spaemann agrees that we are bound by a kind of necessity only to will certain goods and reject others. He also challenges directly other kinds of determinism, which mitigate human responsibility, using analytical and systematic argumentation.<sup>62</sup>

Let us take for granted the authors’ general stance against determinism and the reliability of Spaemann’s claims against it. What subsequently presents itself to all concerned is the problem of decision-making. Deliberation, however, is not a concept Giussani develops. His method appears not to allow for it insofar as he relies either on a prior set of convictions about good or evil, or an instinctive sense about right and wrong, both of which make it possible to decide and act without having first to deliberate.

Formally stated, if  $x$  is the All that encompasses the truth of  $y$  in all times and in all places in exactly the same way, then any uncertainty that arises concerning  $y$  could only be perpetuated either by some misunderstanding concerning  $x$  or the methodological misapplication of  $x$  to  $y$ . The only kind of problem that could arise, then, either stems from second guessing the convictions to which one has already given assent or one’s gut reactions of respect and aversion. There are certainly precedents for this prescriptive line of thought. Take the epistles of St. Paul, for instance, and perhaps most famously the verse he addressed to the Colossians: “Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all.”<sup>63</sup> But it is important to take note of the tone and language of the epistle. Paul’s letter is written in a prescriptive genre much as the official pronouncements of the Church are. This genre may be applied well or badly to practical problems depending on the case. In general, however, practical problems await more particularized solutions.

Spaemann not only applies the Christian critique of stoicism to obtain practical solutions, he identifies the different kinds of problem that could arise and

---

<sup>61</sup> Colombo, “La filosofia religiosa di Maurizio Blondel,” in *La Scuola Cattolica* 62.4 (August 1934): 401-411.

<sup>62</sup> Spaemann, *Persons*, 208-209.

<sup>63</sup> Col. 3:11.

thus anticipates the possible outcomes that attend the acting subject. Therefore, belief in a personal God, on the one hand, opens new attitudinal possibilities, many of which are expressed in the Psalms: “questioning, petition, thankfulness, alienation, reproach, and the choice between defiance and trusting love.”<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, Spaemann allows that a problem may elicit different responses from different subjects, and he appreciates, therefore, the role of argument in seeking a best account possible. In addition, he makes provision for the two-pronged dilemma: the feeling of inadequacy in the absence of a good and sufficient reason concerning which road to take. Moreover, he also recognizes that contingency and chance may sometimes force decisions, foreclosing on the possibility of working through to solutions.

In each of these scenarios, excepting the last, Spaemann finds intuitions a useful means of approach. The use of intuitions requires the willingness to take a risk; but that does not diminish their reliability in most instances, barring the unexpected. Risk, for Giussani, poses a different kind of problem: one of courage, which calls for the energy derived from one’s participation in a community, the “communitarian phenomenon.” But what does Giussani say about intuitions?

Indeed, Giussani has an account of intuitions, which is his account of the heart. In contrast to Spaemann, he considers the heart’s functions to be first nature, like instincts. Spaemann recognizes the influence of intuitions in day-to-day living and even warrants their designation as first nature to the extent that, being habits of thought, they are experienced as such. For both authors, gut reactions are bound up with authenticity of the will and an ordered perception of reality, with what ought to be desired and with what is worthy of humanity, with a standard by which to evaluate practices and a sentiment that nature appears to have given humanity.<sup>65</sup> The functions of first nature, in short, are a standard of conscience for the second. Indeed, secondary systems “can establish and sustain themselves unless they are compatible with the flexible nature of the first.”<sup>66</sup> Spaemann includes among the individual’s most important intuitions the sense of *who I am* and *what I want fundamentally*, making the willing of some things and the not-willing of others unavoidable. He also recognizes that a single problem can elicit as many intuitions

---

<sup>64</sup> Spaemann, *Persons*, 201.

<sup>65</sup> Spaemann, *Persons*, 199.

<sup>66</sup> Spaemann, *Persons*, 199.

as there are persons confronting it, not all of which are necessarily commensurable. A moral dilemma will depend for its solution on argument, and argument will draw on the virtues. Formally speaking, however, since habits and virtues are acquired through education and experience, the definition of intuitions along these lines belongs to second, not first nature.

It is not likely that Giussani would disagree entirely with the formal account of intuitions given by Spaemann, considering his enthusiasm for MacIntyre's idea of achieving cultural renewal through the erection of communities dedicated to forming consciences in the tradition of the classical virtues. Giussani's account of moral judgement, however, does not provide a strong account of habits and virtues or the role of tradition in their cultivation. Moreover, in saying that the interventions of CDO are motivated by cultural decline but that they are delivered on different terms than MacIntyre's (*IPO*, 159), he may indeed be isolating the difference that the centrality of the virtues makes to MacIntyre's account. Giussani would not say that conversion is organic, however, but that the deliveries of the heart are a "reasonable" criterion of judgment as long as there is a prior resolve to adhere to and act on the basis of an inner law. In this sense, Giussani argues, intuitions are fully in line with the medieval dictum *agere sequitur esse* (action follows being) (*USP*, 276-277), where the heart is the essence of man and in acting (*in actu exercito*) man becomes conscious of himself to the core (*IPO*, 119). In the case of persons, however, the logic can run in the opposite direction too: actions affect what we are, as Spaemann suggests, which makes the role of tradition in the transmission of culture all the more important.<sup>67</sup> Giussani, of course, is quick to acknowledge the influence teachers have had on his own cultural formation, and obedience, for him, is a matter of affection for the teachers from whom one has received the law. But all this sits rather awkwardly with the idea that the deliveries of the heart are innate and universally applicable. Furthermore, the idea that subjects and tradition always agree on the basis of the heart leads him to greet rival intuitions with some quite dogmatic replies, such that perfect obedience (to the Magisterium here or to the "method of the Movement" there) is recommended universally and in all cases as the standard of ecclesial fidelity and communion (*IPO*, 178 and 189).

---

<sup>67</sup> Spaemann, *Persons*, 205.

*Hegelian Tendencies* will refer to the author's development of the idea of the Christian community in relation to the secular public sphere along the lines of Hegel's notion of *civil society*. The term "civil society" will be clarified as we proceed. For now, it refers to the free association of individuals for the construction of "a dwelling more adequate to the heart," and advocates the minimisation of the government's sphere of activity, such as through the principle of subsidiarity. I am motivated to test Hegelian tendencies as the cause of vagueness regarding the role of prayer and tradition in shaping society, including what the idea of the human person adds to the "passion" that incites action and generates culture. In what follows in this section I aim to be largely descriptive. Critique will follow in a later section towards the end of this chapter.

Hegel's influence on modern Catholic theology has been widespread, if at times indirect. There were several translations of and commentaries on Hegel's thought and Hegelian Marxism circulating throughout Italy during Giussani's lifetime. At various points in this section, I will make reference to the ideas of Hegelian provenance with which Giussani was acquainted, some of which he endorsed, others of which he repudiated. Giussani, himself, was not a deep reader of Hegel and, in fact, considered himself diametrically opposed to the idealist tradition to which Hegel belonged. He rejects Hegel's immanent theology (*AD*, 347; *DMT*, 24) and evokes the rhetoric of ultimate satisfaction to gesture instead at a "vaster horizon (e.g., *IPO*, 126)." Furthermore, not unlike Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950), whom he quotes on occasion (*IPO*, 156-157 and 160), Giussani associates Hegel with the modern architects of systems of thought and impersonal structures.<sup>68</sup> Along these lines, Giussani vigorously opposed the proponents of Marxism and Liberation Theology, who owed Hegel a debt of gratitude, and dissociated characteristic acts of Christian charity, such as the redress of injustice, from theories of religion based on social and economic processes. But Giussani was also well acquainted with the philosophical writings of Maurice Blondel, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Karol

---

<sup>68</sup> Emmanuel Mounier writes "*Hegel* remains the imposing and monstrous architect of the imperialism of the impersonal idea; in which all things and all beings are dissolved into their representations; it is not by chance that Hegel comes, in the final reckoning, to believe in complete subservience of the individual to the State." ("Informal Introduction to the Personal Universe," in *Personalism*, [London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1952], xvi).

Wojtyla, for instance, all of whom drew from Hegel, differently indeed than Marxists and Liberation theologians, but with decisive outcomes for their theologies, nonetheless. Throughout this section, I will consider the Hegelian influence of these three authors on the formulation of Giussani's theses concerning freedom, making good use of history and context to reconstruct the original questions Giussani was trying to answer by turning to their insights.

Throughout this section, I will use Jonathan Robinson's interpretation of Hegel from *The Mass and Modernity: Walking Backward to Heaven*.<sup>69</sup> In a chapter entitled "Hegel: God Becomes the Community," Robinson evaluates Hegel's influence on Catholic theology, particularly since the Second Vatican Council, and deals with certain issues concerning the relationship between doctrine and the public sphere, including the role and importance of tradition in relation to autonomy – all of which touch on Giussani's account of freedom.

## Analysis

### i) *The Shaping of Society*

Robinson notes both the pervasiveness and subtlety of Hegel's influence on theology, particularly with regards to theological reflection on the shaping of society. The point of Robinson's description, quoted below, is to highlight the contemporary arrangement of key theological terms, viz., God, human genius, and the public sphere, which is arguably Hegelian. Robinson's reconstruction of this one Hegelian paradigm, I believe, casts some light on Giussani's theological endorsement and interpretation of MacIntyre's idea concerning "[...] the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us;" to which Giussani adds, "Even if not precisely in these terms, we [the CDO] also belong to this same floodtide of new life (*IPO*, 159)." Giussani's project, to which he sometimes refers as "the miracle of change," matches up nicely to Robinson's description of Hegel's influence on Catholic thought, even if Giussani would likely have greeted the news of Hegel's influence on his own thought with a sense of failure:

---

<sup>69</sup> Jonathan Robinson, "Hegel: God becomes the Community," in *The Mass and Modernity: Walking Backwards to Heaven* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 116-146.



A good deal of [Hegel and Marx] has influenced thinkers in the [Catholic] Church. It is not always very clear whether those who write theology are aware of the source of their ideas or, if they are aware, just how frank they are prepared to be about the real foundations of their thought. For example, when a contemporary theologian writes that ‘Transformation, therefore, constitutes an important hermeneutic tool for opening the Eucharistic mystery to contemporary religious consciousness. *It is also more in tune with a modern-day dynamic interpretation of the person as part of the creative process at the heart of humanity itself and of human history*’, I contend that such passages are based on a philosophical view that owes more to Hegel and Marx than it does to Christianity.<sup>70</sup> (Robinson’s gloss).

Robinson illustrates the effect of Hegel on Catholic theology using a passage from *Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments* by German Martinez.<sup>71</sup> Martinez’s logic of “transformation” implicitly subscribes to a thesis, attributed to Hegel, that society is a nation when the norms of a people’s tradition can be harmonized with the laws of public life, recalling the lesson learned from Antigone’s tragic fate.<sup>72</sup> “Perhaps the word ‘culture’ is the best word for considering the harmonization of factors [that builds up civilization],” Giussani writes. “A culture ties the particular to the universal; a position is ‘cultured’ if it tends to tie the passing moment with the total horizon of things (thus, by its nature, every culture should strive to be catholic, universal; otherwise it is not a real culture) (*IPO*, 126).” This thesis is a prescriptive feature of communitarian thought, which has gained momentum in Catholic circles over the last century, at least.<sup>73</sup>

Before visiting the theological implications of Martinez’s Hegelian debt, we do well to list different kinds of communitarian thought that sprang up during Giussani’s lifetime and with which he would have been acquainted.

<sup>70</sup> Robinson, “Hegel: God becomes the Community,” 117-118.

<sup>71</sup> German Martinez, *Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 178.

<sup>72</sup> Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, translated by T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 114-115. Spaemann explains the significance of Antigone’s predicament in light of the ancient conception of freedom: “Second nature, the custom of living appropriately, was what *eleutheria*, freedom, amounted to for the Greeks of the sixth century BC. Someone who stood in the way of it was reckoned a tyrant. Antigone was not deprived of freedom by the ancient requirement that she should bury her brother, but by Creon’s innovative demand that she should not do so” (*Persons*, 198).

<sup>73</sup> See: Robert L. Philips, “Communitarianism, the Vatican, and a New World Order,” in *Ethics & International Affairs*, 5.1 (2006): 135-147. See also: *The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Rome and Washington DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004), §§ 417-420.

- (i) Reflection on freedom in the Anglo-American world, by Catholic thinkers such as Michael Novak, Richard John Neuhaus, and George Weigel, has turned to communitarian prescriptions to critique the over-extension of government, and, thus, to promote civil society and liberal capitalism, as David Schindler has indicated.<sup>74</sup>
- (ii) The Principle of Subsidiarity, shaped in part by the subjugation of the Church in Italy during the Fascist period, has had the autonomy of religious institutions in view, as well as the harmonisation of Church and state.<sup>75</sup>
- (iii) Through his development of the concept of *communio*, John Paul II identified “creativity” and “receptivity” as indispensable facets of any society that calls itself communitarian, thereby adding the concept of person to the concept of free will.<sup>76</sup>

Giussani’s recommendations to the CDO are a synthesis of the Anglo-American idea of civil society, the Church’s teaching on subsidiarity, and John Paul II’s idea of *communio*. Giussani aligns himself with the Anglo-American style of communitarian thought through the CDO’s promotion of a free-market economy; he aligns himself with the Principle of Subsidiarity through the idea that individuals can unleash a “floodtide of new life,” acting as catalysts for the “miracle of change” (*la compagnia si dilata in civiltà*); and he aligns himself with John Paul II through his valuation of artists, artisans, human creativity, and a generous spirit of sacrifice, all of which support the communitarian thesis that “the embedded and embodied individual is a truer and more accurate model, a better conception of reality, than, say, liberal individualism, or atomism, or structuralist Marxism.”<sup>77</sup>

Each of these versions of communitarianism posits a sphere of activity for the CDO, largely economic in its relations and distinct from the life of the family, where

---

<sup>74</sup> David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Centre of the Church: Communio, Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 114-42.

<sup>75</sup> Pius XI, *Quadragesimo anno*, Encyclical on the Reconstruction of Social Order (Vatican City, 1931), numerous editions.

<sup>76</sup> See: Wojtyła, *Person and Community*, 321.

<sup>77</sup> The article continues: “A society which understands itself to be constituted by atomistic and autonomous discrete individuals, and which makes that kind of autonomy its highest value, will not work [for the communitarian]. Similarly, a top-down imposition of values (as in Stalinism) or the attempt completely to subordinate the individual to the state (as in modern fascism) will fail (as well as being morally repellent and indefensible)” (Elizabeth Frazer, “Communitarianism,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 150-151).

the continuity of a tradition is secured through the ordinary exchange of social and economic relations. Hegel called this sphere “civil society” (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*). The term civil society grew out of the family. Its genealogy, Jonathan Robinson notes, goes back to “the sphere where family members work with other families to pursue ends that are directly related neither to the family, on the one hand, nor to the state, on the other. [...] Through this system, [the member of a family] becomes an individual person who is neither only a member of family nor a citizen of the state. He now pursues his own particular aims, and he does this in union with other individuals who are also doing the same thing.”<sup>78</sup> At the heart of civil society is the idea that the human person is an actor, a protagonist for change.

ii) *Protagonism*

Thus Giussani arrives at his bold proclamation concerning cultural protagonism: “man is the creator, inventor, and catalyst of an *oeuvre* (IPO, 127).” I argue that this idea and its corollaries fit the Hegelian paradigm Robinson excavates from Martinez’s conception of the Eucharist; viz., according to an “*interpretation of the person as part of the creative process at the heart of humanity itself and of human history*.” The centrality of the human person, within this particular arrangement of God and society, directs action to achieving the best conditions for human flourishing in the immanent frame.

Your companionship is directed to seeking a more habitable dwelling for the human person. [...] And this is because the human person is, by means of his obvious concreteness, the object of your passion. That is to say, man who is needy. In fact, need is the condition in which man has existence and rediscovers his real self. It is today’s needs [that matter]. To think of resolving today’s worries tomorrow or within a year is highly equivocal if it does not immediately organize factors in a manner that responds best to hunger and thirst, to the needs which are felt today (IPO, 131).

The gathering of a people, the channelling of gifts and talents into concrete projects, coalesces around the felt need, like an instinct, to improve the conditions of human flourishing. The person is at the heart of humanity and human history; she is the protagonist for “the miracle of change” (IPO, 159).

---

<sup>78</sup> Robinson, “Hegel: God Becomes the Community,” 133. Cf. Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Right*, tr. T. M. Knox, 122.

The arrangement of a stable and flourishing society unfolds, for Giussani, through human protagonism – one which is motivated by everything that matters to what it means to be human. Balthasar thought along the same lines, situating human action at centre stage, when developing his concept of theodramatics. Ben Quash notes:

Balthasar is [...] living and breathing Hegel's analysis of drama. [...] Individual characters (like the apostolic witnesses and catechists of Balthasar's scheme) and their aims are important inasmuch as they generate action. They are dramatically significant *for the sake of* the action. And the action is significant, in turn, inasmuch as it is penetrated by and fitted to the characters and their aims. The intentions and aims of acting characters are not to be separated from external happenings and deeds. There is a striking interdependence of the subject's mind and character (on the one hand) and the *telos* of the action (on the other), and this last point in particular (about the *telos*) is something that Balthasar's understanding of drama has inherited very substantially from Hegel.<sup>79</sup>

Similar to Balthasar, Giussani's account of culture, with its emphasis on protagonism (*in actu exercito*), follows Robinson's Hegel. From a passion for humanity, the gathering of a people and their subsequent movement into action "dilates into civilization (*IPO*, 157-160)." Balthasar alone need not be Giussani's inspiration here. Blondel put forth a similar rationale for the founding of a nation and national sentiment:

We do not come together simply to come together. We cannot contain between two individuals this torrent [of common action] which flows from the will. The unity of the lives joined together must be more than the sum of the lives in isolation. This surplus must spill over and the superabundance of multiple beings must engender a work that will become its reason for being.<sup>80</sup>

Thus, from the idea that an *oeuvre* rides on "action that is penetrated by and fitted to the characters and their aims," Giussani arrives at the idea that the Christian fact is something which must be *created* or *engendered* through human protagonism: "The reality of the Church in the world passes through some factor, however small, which is our presence at the factory, at the firm, wherever it is that we find ourselves (*IPO*, 87)." Perhaps this results from a tacit belief – signalled by Giussani's epistemology

<sup>79</sup> Ben Quash, "Drama and the Ends of Modernity," in *Balthasar at the End of Modernity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999, 139-172; here 150.

<sup>80</sup> Blondel, *Action* (1893), 238.

– that modern religious consciousness, as Hegel had seen, “requires an account of how its communal, reflective activity of taking something as authoritative can serve as a ground for taking something to be sacred.”<sup>81</sup> By means of harmonising inner-subjectivity and outer-world, a simple gesture of solidarity, “which originates reactively from the goodness of human nature, ties itself to something more vast, it becomes assimilated to and redirected to a vaster horizon (*IPO*, 126).”

*Concrete, not abstract answers*

By reading Giussani’s account in light of its origins in history we are able to catch sight of the concerns that shaped it in various ways, including why he disparaged abstract philosophy; it also brings us to some preliminary conclusions about the extent of Hegel’s influence on his thought. Giussani had realized, at a meeting in Subiaco in 1968, that the Marxist sensibility at the heart of the student riots of ’68, while wreaking havoc through Europe’s universities, had substantially expressed to the pastors of the Church “a real and positive need that demanded a response.”<sup>82</sup> Reflecting on the incident some twenty years later, he wrote: “I have always referred to ’68 as an ‘anti-authoritarian rebellion’ which had a sincere first impulse (*un moto iniziale sincero*).”<sup>83</sup> The alienating structures of modern life, apparently, were a real problem and the riot’s justification. Giussani was not alone in holding this point of view. In a context different from Giussani’s, the political philosopher Eric Voegelin (1901-1985) deemed Marxism’s influence as unfortunate, but necessary: “[Marx] laid his finger on the sore spot of modern industrialized society [...], that is, the growth of economic institutions into a power of such overwhelming influence on the life of every single man, that in the face of such power all talk about human freedom becomes futile.”<sup>84</sup> Back in 1968, the infiltration

<sup>81</sup> Pinkard, *Hegel: The Sociality of Reason*, 225.

<sup>82</sup> Giussani, et al., “Ipotesi per una interpretazione e valorizzazione del Movimento Studentesco all’interno del movimento di comunione,” typescript (Subiaco, September 1968). CL Archives, via Porpora 127, Milan.

<sup>83</sup> “CL e il ’68,” edited by Davide Rondoni in *Litterae Communionis – CL*, 20.5 (May 1993): 13.

<sup>84</sup> Eric Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, ed., John H. Hallowell (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1975), 299; quoted by McNerney, *John Paul II: Poet and Philosopher*, 139. In the same spirit of things, Giussani quotes John Paul II’s *Dives in misericordia* (Encyclical Letter, 1980), § 11 in *IPO*, 12: “Man rightly fears falling victim to an oppression that will deprive him of his interior freedom, of the possibility of expressing the truth of which he is convinced, of the faith that he professes, of the ability to obey the voice of conscience that tells him the right path to follow.”

of Marxism in the *Movimento Studentesco*, which Giussani had been appointed by Archbishop Montini in 1954 to direct, seemed unstoppable, even threatening to the establishment. The Subiaco typescript speaks of “a force already organized and structured, [...] a vertex that is gathering in the formation of a political party with a Marxian logic.”<sup>85</sup>

Giussani clearly repudiated Marx’s vision of freedom as the emancipation of man from labour. At the same time, he wanted to address his audience concerns over alienation. The path here, similar to that taken by the proponents of the *nouvelle théologie*, was to make life the starting point of theological reflection, bypassing, as much as possible, the dry and abstract metaphysics typified by Garrigou-Lagrange. For priests of Giussani’s mentality (e.g., Chenu, Balthasar, de Lubac), the “I” afforded the most engaging point of reflection to their contemporaries, ushering the concept of person to centre stage. And that is why the community, envisaged by Giussani – be it GS, CL, or CDO – fostered moments of self-reflection, such as the *Scuola Quaderni*, or *School of Community*, or the *Meeting of Friendship Among Peoples* (Rimini), such that questions turning on identity and the meaning and purpose of life could be explored. The integral vision of the person, including his personal and social dimensions, coincided with accounts of the acting person. Meanwhile, the epistemology makes the heart (its innate criteria, including values) the basis of organizing society. The epistemological process relies on the community’s self-reflective activity to affirm theological propositions which are taken to be self-evident, rather than on a deep training in a tradition to render clearly what would otherwise be opaque. Theological propositions, according to the former alternative, are reached heuristically, after the long run of enquiry, vis-à-vis the ultimate answer to man’s quest for meaning, thereby “supernaturalizing the natural.”<sup>86</sup> While Giussani’s approach to freedom successfully avoids charges of behaviourism in its intended application to the act of faith, aligning him with de Lubac, Arendt, and others with whom he shared this concern, it carries consequences

---

<sup>85</sup> Giussani, et al., “Ipotesi per una interpretazione e valorizzazione del Movimento Studentesco all’interno del movimento di comunione,” typescript (Subiaco, September 1968). CL Archives, via Porpora 127, Milan.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory beyond Secular Reason*, 206-207.

for tradition, practical deliberation, and discursive reason, all of which impact his anthropology, as we will see in the following section.

### OBSERVATIONS

I find that the abstract deliveries of Giussani's epistemological tendency, the results of which are unwittingly compounded by the tendencies I have classified as Hegelian, compete with his overarching goal to provide his readers with practical-theories-to-live-by. These competing tendencies, in turn, generate vague descriptions in Giussani's attempt to articulate the notion of freedom in the relationship between doctrine and the public sphere, as well as between tradition and the individual "I." Since Giussani's attempt at reconciling these tensions is itself abstract, contrary to his explicit intention to remain concrete, the implications are problematic for each term in their practical applications to real problems. For as long as these vaguenesses are left undetermined, Giussani's account may be expected to continue generating answers that weaken the pragmatic purport of his writing. My observations anticipate the kinds of problem that may result from the practical application of the account to real questions, and do so with a view to highlighting the areas calling for urgent repair.

#### *Concerning Epistemology*

The goal of transcendence, to which Giussani orients his readers, is not so easily achieved insofar as it is epistemologically-driven. I argue, following Charles Taylor, that epistemology plays into one of the principal features of secularization theory.<sup>87</sup> It is responsible for "disenchantment" – the waning of sacramental sensibilities typified in the Middle Ages, including the declining sense of inhabiting a spirit-filled world, which follows a shift from embodied religion to intellectualized religion.<sup>88</sup> The intellectualization of religion, in other words, "goes with the bent of certain theoretical practices and insights that make us see ourselves as living in an *impersonal* order [...] capable of being grasped scientifically, empirically, and

---

<sup>87</sup> Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007), 539-593; here 557-560.

<sup>88</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 541.

instrumentally [my gloss].”<sup>89</sup> We noted earlier Giussani’s tendency to buy into impersonal accounts at the expense of practical-theories-to-live-by. We are now in a better position to see that the tendency is epistemological, stemming from the pastoral desire to want to give the act of faith the benefit of the supposedly harder proofs of science.

Giussani’s account of the act of faith begins to equivocate when the attempt to ground religion in the aspiration for certitude, of a scientific kind, is required to look beyond the immanent to the transcendent. The path to transcendence relies on a self-reflective method that makes conscious the inward desire for infinity, which is innate. For this reason, Giussani refers to “needs and exigencies of the heart,” and lists among them truth, beauty, justice, happiness. At the same time, the heart presents a direct challenge to the Enlightenment critique of the emotions. Giussani writes:

Reason is not as arthritic or paralyzed as has been imagined by so much of modern philosophy, which has reduced it to a single operation – ‘logic’ – or to a specific type of phenomenon, to a certain capacity for ‘empirical demonstration.’ Reason is much larger than this; it is life, a life faced with the complexity and multiplicity of reality, the richness of the real. Reason is agile, goes everywhere, travels many roads (*RS*, 17).

To strengthen the viability of the heart as a criterion of judgement, i.e., to “broaden reason,” Giussani takes up the cause against Enlightenment rationalism, joining the likes of Romano Guardini and Hannah Arendt. As part of his strategy he invokes realism (over and against the self-made individual or our holding inner representations of outer reality); he posits persons as actors freely and thoughtfully attending to the background of their native surroundings, choosing what counts as authoritative in determining the self and society (over and against the behaviourist thesis that we are determined); and he directs the gaze to something that lies beneath surface appearances, not only to help us cope with questions of meaning and identity, highlighting what is purposeful in life without treating reality as an end in itself, but to open the heart to a vaster horizon of meaning. At each pass, the emotions and affectivity are restored to the moral life and the agent believes and obeys because he

---

<sup>89</sup> Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 541.



is more than the sum of his thoughts: he feels, desires, and loves. Moral obedience rooted in the heart is no longer duty before an impersonal order; rather, obedience is the person's free and loving response to a presence, a companionship that is an authority.<sup>90</sup>

And yet, while Giussani's epistemology may address the Enlightenment challenge to religious belief and practice, his attempt to do so by grounding the act of faith in a scientific kind of certitude, leaves the original problem intact. Beyond the attempt to reach a secular audience by using a non-threatening language, to teach a method by which to render obedience thoughtful obedience – all of which is good in itself – the epistemology claims a special role for the "I" and posits special ends for the "I." But the emphasis on the "I" accounts for Giussani's unwitting recurrence to an Enlightenment logic, whereby the goals of actors are separated from the tradition in which they are embedded and embodied. Now Giussani's achievement, in great part, was precisely to call for the integration of the customs, rubrics, and practices of the Church into ordinary life and civil society precisely when they came under attack. His reference to tradition, however, is not a point of departure, as a source from which moral deliberation draws, but the outcome of trial and error. When tradition returns as a trustworthy principle after rigorous testing against the heart, it is tacked-on from the outside, as a seal of fidelity and serious living. It may become a source for the formation of conscience, however; when it does, the replies become dogmatic, rather than nuanced by particulars.

Thus, we return to Giussani's description of the deliberating subject who is the self-reflective subject of the Enlightenment and its aftermath. This is the person who sets out heuristically to test hypotheses, seeking truth in the correspondence between heart and world – the assimilation of inner self with outer reality– and to deem what he finds authoritative as the ground for what is sacred and worthy of

---

<sup>90</sup> According to Josef Ratzinger, the Catholic emphasis on the heart, borrowed from St. Augustine, the fifteenth-century Catholic humanists, such as St. Philip Neri and St. Francis de Sales, and the seventeenth-century devotion to the Sacred Heart, repaired the "decided rationalism" of the pre-conciliar moral theology standardized by the manuals: viz., the "tendency to stress the negative aspect of so many prohibitions," rather than the "great message of liberation and freedom given to us in an encounter with Christ." "The Renewal of Moral Theology: Perspectives on Vatican II and *Veritatis Splendor*" in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 32 (2005), 357-369, at 358; quoted in Tracy Rowland, "Beyond Moralism," in *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 69.

being grasped. In so doing, the subject replicates the rationalism that Giussani wants him to evade, signalled by the attempt, almost always dogmatic, to fit universal solutions to particular problems. Stated formally: if  $x$  is true,  $y$  is to be done, not for the sake of  $x$ , but for  $z$ ; where  $x$  is God,  $y$  is the law, and  $z$  is the ideal of ultimate satisfaction.

According to this logic, after Giussani reinstates epistemology, grounding the act of faith in a judgement based on the self-discovered “I,” the existential relevance of the transcendent seems less robust, even feeble; for the logic of the argument separates God from the truth about oneself. Once this separation occurs, the individual is faced with confusion about what he thinks he would like to be, which might differ from what God would rather have him be, and what he really is. This line of questioning, however, leads unnecessarily to self-doubt. Once it is clear even to Giussani that the heart can be confused, obedience resurfaces as the answer to questions of self-realization: I become myself by following an Other who is an authority for me concerning my destiny. Depending on one’s perspective and the case at hand, Giussani’s solution of following an Other turns out either satisfying or disappointing results for freedom.<sup>91</sup> It would seem that Giussani’s recommendation to obey precisely *to avert a moment of uncertainty or crisis*, as I have pointed out above, can seem precipitous or even decisive, running counter to the thrust of his argument on the freedom of “I” for the “I’s” self-realization. The serious reader, at this point, cannot help but pose again the original question with which Giussani began: how can one obey and still be free?

The answer, if it is to avoid the pitfalls I have just highlighted, must be less reliant on epistemology. Consider the following alternative which distinguishes

---

<sup>91</sup> Cf. “[...] for Giussani the very act with which consciousness addresses reality, inexorably reveals the decision of the self-awareness of the ‘I’ as regards existence and its foundation. [Giussani’s] analysis of factual freedom of human beings, which starts off by pointing out the weight carried, in its originary nucleus, by natural human inclinations, passes through the interpretation of freewill to culminate in the explication of freedom as adherence/obedience to the attraction of the Infinite. [...] Yet the most original aspect in the restatement of this scheme, which after all is the classical one, is seen in Giussani’s capacity to retain *the best results for transcendental thought about freedom*. I am referring to the conviction [...] that the factual freedom of the ‘I’ is called to transcend itself, yet it is incapable [...] of doing so by itself. In this sense freedom has to be freed. It needs an event that will make it possible: the Christian fact, in the free surrender (*sponte*) of the Crucified to the Father through the Spirit, brings about that perfect correspondence between the Foundation (infinite freedom, Trinity) and created freedom that makes this possible for every act of human freedom [my gloss].” (Angelo Scola, “A Style of Thought,” in *A Generative Thought*, edited by Elisa Buzzi [Montreal/Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003], 3-33; here 16).

between obedience as asceticism and obedience through discernment: (1) If the matter concerns divine faith, e.g., where  $y$  is the dominical obligation, for instance, and  $x$  is the deepest source from which  $y$  derives, such as Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers, action- $y$  ought to be performed because  $x$  is the case; for the Catholic cannot begin to conceive of his “I” outside the tradition. Obedience in this example is a matter of ascetical discipline and is carried out in accordance with one’s conscience, even if it runs counter to the will. (2) Where the matter concerns practical living, action- $y$  ought to be performed according to a certain manner after rational discussion and deliberation have reached their conclusions. Such discussion and deliberation will have used the deepest sources and tools of the tradition: e.g., the logic of scripture, wise counsel, historical precedent, foresight, etc.

The importance of tradition, according to (2), is stressed in relation to *how* an obligation might be met given that one faces a morally difficult circumstance, i.e., not as the disengaged and impartial agent motivated by duty, but as the recipient of a language, culture, history, and tradition without which the I could not be conceived. The adequacy of one’s formation, of course, is crucial to the effectiveness of that judgment. At any rate, there is no need to probe the confused inner world of the heart self-reflexively for a judgement on reality, nor to resort to blind obedience so as to avoid the discomfort of having to work through problems or to settle in the discomfort of their occasional insolubility. The answer to practical problems, in other words, is neither the result of ascetical obedience, nor loving sacrifice (at least not primarily). Practical answers are prudential answers formed from the perspective of a tradition. They require patient and careful interpretation of particulars. Patience and care bring time, discursive reason, and rational deliberation into play. Only by the use of these methods can obedience be called thoughtful obedience. But there is always also a prior dependence for the use of these methods on the tradition itself, which is their source, the consent to which is a kind of obedience and the appreciation of which is the recognition of one’s indebtedness to it.

Faced with his readers’ confusion, Giussani’s proclivity to probe epistemology to achieve more clarity about the act of faith – a move owed to the disengaged and universalizing expectations of his scientifically-minded interlocutors, not to mention the distance he himself seeks from behaviourism and structural

Marxism – issues unwittingly in intellectual statements about  $x$  and  $z$  and abstract, universal, and prescriptive approaches to  $y$ . In addition to subverting his own purpose to render revelation accessible and vital for the formulation of practical-theories-to-live-by – a move motivated by his terror of “abstract phrases” (*AD*, 112-113) – Giussani unwittingly excludes discursive reason and the tools of practical deliberation, such as memory, reason, understanding, teachability, ingenuity (on the cognitive side), and foresight, circumspection, and caution (on the normative side). Furthermore, he fails to mention the role of the intellectual and ethical virtues, relying instead on the intuitions of the heart, which afford no guarantee in particular situations that his readers will show excellence in judgement.

### *Concerning Robinson's Hegel*

So far, I have considered philosophically how Giussani's emphasis on epistemology maintains the abstract, prescriptive, and universalizing tendencies he wishes to overcome. I will try, in this section, to relate these effects to the debt Giussani owes Hegel. I should like, at this point, to make a few observations pertaining to Giussani's description of the self-reflective practices of the community. This Hegelian tendency, I contend, generates many of the same kinds of ambiguities for tradition and institutions as the epistemological tendency described above. The cause, however, is different, as are also some of its new effects. Once again, I use Robinson's critique of Hegel as my guide.

### *Protagonism as Epic Transformation*

With Giussani's Hegelianism, it is not the essentialist claims he stakes for intuitions that put traditions and institutions on the line, but the shaping of history and time through self-reflection and human agency, where what counts as authoritative is also the ground for what counts as sacred.<sup>92</sup> Moral reflection, then,

---

<sup>92</sup> Consider the following comments of Cardinal Angelo Scola on one of Giussani's convictions: “[Giussani:] ‘It then became clear to me that a tradition, or more generally a human experience, can only challenge history, can only subsist in the stream of time, insofar as it comes to express itself and communicate itself in ways that have cultural dignity.’ [Scola] But this cultural dignity is impossible, unless it starts from the experience of a subject, both personal and communal, easily identified in its ideal traits but fixed within history, which proposes itself to man with simplicity and without complications by virtue of its intrinsic reasons [not power]. Such a subject is not afraid of all-out

comes to be focused on reconciling the secular-sacred divide, so that various other oppositions tearing at the fabric of a culture and civilization (e.g., inner/outer, reality/appearance, truth/myth) might be assimilated to a vaster horizon, the infinite.<sup>93</sup> The acting person is the protagonist of culture and civilization, tying the needs that he feels within himself and that impinge on him from without to that vaster horizon where binaries are united in a harmonious whole. Whether acting on one's own, or with others through a movement, the kind of protagonism that has the human person as its passion always unleashes a "floodtide of new life," leading to the dramatic and epic transformation of society into a "dwelling more adequate to the heart." Strikingly, the dramatic unfolding of social transformation through the subject's protagonism does not ask *how* or *whether* a course of action ought to be taken, but *why* it ought to be pursued, which is, of course, to ask an epistemological question about the value of ends and the certitude for their grounds. The answer to this kind of question, within CL or CDO, tends itself to be cast in dramatic, if highly abstract and universal terms; as one long-time member of the Movement once explained to me: "Either what I encountered in the Movement is real, or everything is false."<sup>94</sup>

### *Corollaries*

While a deeper communion and spiritual liberation are good in themselves and encouraged by the Church, they can lead individuals to equate participation in an ecclesial movement with incorporation in the Church.<sup>95</sup> In the following quotation, taken from the spiritual Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation in 2009, the President of CL, Julián Carrón, generalizes his own experience of the Movement, recommending Giussani's method universally as the absolute grounds of authentic belief and practice in the Christian faith:

---

engagement." Quoted in Julián Carrón, "Can a man be born again, once he is old?" Exercises of the Fraternity of Communion and Liberation (Rimini, 2010), Suppl. to *Tracce* 12.6 (2010), 24.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. "The issue is that we set things at odds with one another, as this question and other before it show: grace and freedom, the 'I' and the community, Christ and the companionship – everything at odds." (Carrón, "Can a man be born again, once he is old?" 62).

<sup>94</sup> Giacomo Mazzi in an interview with the author, March 2008, Edinburgh, Scotland.

<sup>95</sup> The dangers that attach to ecclesial movements is described by Tena Garriga. Bishop Garriga was one of the writers who contributed to *Il Concilio Vaticano II*, ed. Rino Fisilchella (Cinisello Balsamo [Milan]: San Paolo, 2000), quoted in Robinson, "Hegel: God Becomes the Community," 145.

I met the Movement about twenty years ago, but only in these circumstances, in this fact, has the Mystery of the great Presence been revealed to me (p. 28).

I remember that for me this was perhaps the most salient question in my encounter with the Movement: it put tools into my hands for following my human path. Without this, you cannot understand even faith. Thus, let us take a moment to begin again from here, because this is not the last footnote of the last page of the twentieth book of Father Giussani! This is the beginning of the Trilogy: what experience is (p. 52).

[...] not having understood that we have comprehended the principles and values [of Christianity] thanks to the encounter we have had with Christ in the Movement, which has filled our life with meaning, we often change the method [of the “religious sense”] (p. 65).

Encountering the Movement and taking Giussani’s method seriously, for Carrón, are the sure means to and benchmark of serious Christian commitment. Carron correctly intuits that his own faith is a response to a prior initiative, but he attributes this to Giussani rather than the workings of Holy Spirit through the Church! The ordinary means of formation in the tradition – e.g., Scriptural study, contemplation, observance of the liturgical calendar, Sacramental devotion, Mass, spiritual direction, acquaintance with the lives of the saints, and so on – affecting heart, mind, and will, receive attention insofar as they further the purposes of the Movement, capturing the thrust of its protagonism. Older charisms in the Church (e.g., Benedictine, Franciscan, Dominican, etc.) become interesting to the extent that their practices overlap with those of the Movement.

Catholic journalist Robi Ronza gave Giussani the opportunity to comment on typical descriptions of Catholicity from within CL, where participation in the movement can sometimes be the measure of religious seriousness (in contrast to the ancient view of a living rapport with the Church as “mother and teacher”).<sup>96</sup> Such questions implicitly ask Giussani to explain how his method (i.e., self-reflection on the “I”) squares with a formal education in the moral life and the spiritual worship of the Church. The point would be to determine whether identification with the Movement ultimately replaces the Church and God, such that the grounds for what

---

<sup>96</sup> Cf. “The Church, Mother and Teacher,” in *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London: Geoffrey Chapman – Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994), art. 3, §§2030-2031.

counts as sacred are the grounds for what the community finds is authoritative in its self-reflective practices (e.g., Giussani's method of verification). Giussani replies so as to safeguard the deposit of faith: "One can do as he pleases, but if he calls himself Catholic, there are things he must do. Therefore, we [in the Movement] do not say: 'If you don't do as we are doing you are not Christian;' but 'You are not a Christian if you do not respect the essential factors of the Christian fact, as indicated by the Magisterium, for instance.'"<sup>97</sup> Giussani recognizes that certain kinds of identification with CL could mitigate the role and importance of tradition. His answer attempts to repair the way some CL members see themselves within the Church. While he does not clarify here what the encounter with the Movement adds to the Church that the Church does not already have, one might expect Giussani to cite his epistemology. But if the hallmark of the movement is a method for testing reality against the heart, what does that suggest about Christians who cannot see themselves anywhere else but inside the tradition before any comparison with the heart? Surely he would not share them with unreasonableness.

Giussani's answer exhibits his attempt to reclaim the role of the Church by assimilating subjects to tradition *de jure*, which is its most striking feature. To this end, it has recourse to positivist language: the authority dictated by "facts" and "factors." The upshot turns the original question about the formative role of tradition in the life of a Catholic into a question of disciplinary training – one that aims, as Michel Foucault had observed of modern power-structures, "at producing 'docile bodies': bodies that not only do what we want but do it precisely in the way that we want."<sup>98</sup> Herein lies the crux of the problem: if Giussani successfully brings CL and its members in line with the Magisterium, thereby securing their orthodoxy, he recasts the role of the Magisterium as juridical body and downplays its role as a

---

<sup>97</sup> Giussani gave this statement in reply when an interviewer asked: "*C'è poi una critica che si sente fare, a volte, da parte cattolica: «CL - si sostiene - continua a dirci che se siamo cristiani dobbiamo fare come lei, come se quello che pensa CL fosse obbligatorio per tutti». Che ne pensa?»*" [There is also a critique that we hear from time to time on behalf of certain Catholics: 'CL, we would argue, continues to say that if we are to call ourselves Christians we have to continue doing what [Giussani] says, as though what CL thinks were a rule for everybody.' What are your thoughts on this matter?] "*Comunione e Liberazione: la Chiesa come fatto sociale,*" interview with Antonio Maria Baggio in *Città Nuova*, 7 (1986): 26-29, here 27. Quoted in *IPO*, 189. (My translation).

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977), 138, quoted in Gary Gutting, *Foucault: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 82.

“loving mother.” The role of the Magisterium as loving mother, according to the Catechism of the Catholic Church (1994), is to help the Christian faithful to fulfil their vocations; to receive the Word of God and the grace of the sacraments that sustain them on the way; to learn from the example of holiness and to discern in the Church the authentic witness of those who live it; and to discover in the Church the spiritual tradition and the long history of the saints.<sup>99</sup> Giussani, of course, appreciates the crucial difference between receiving a tradition (on the one hand) and knuckling under its dictates (on the other); just as he appreciates the difference between moral guidance (on the one hand) and the fact of gravity as containing its own law (on the other hand). And yet his account of tradition is generally more attuned to positive law than moral theology, making it somewhat intolerant of ambiguity and unfolding understandings.

Two different lines of enquiry can be pursued at this juncture, one probing the consistencies internal to Giussani’s account, the other probing the consistencies between his account and the tradition in which it is embedded and embodied. Is Giussani’s reference to obedience consistent with his own aim to foster obedience which is thoughtful obedience? Does his self-reflective epistemology and the community’s self-reflective practices on what counts as authoritative train his interlocutors to face moral questions by formulating robust answers – answers which are properly their own because they themselves draw from the tradition’s deepest sources of repair? Is Giussani’s obedience here in line with his wish to foster the ability of youngsters to want to be moved by the highest of desires, such as the universal call to holiness? Or does the emphasis on the method of self-reflection make the reality of God’s existence contingent on community, time, and history? Is there a tendency to identify oneself more with the immanent than with the transcendent order, to be formed more by one’s mature and serious approach to the existential questions that arise, and to attend the eventual encounter with the undeniable presence, or to read life’s questions from one’s prior induction in the practices of the Church and keeping the Ten Commandments? And to the extent that the experience of an encounter remains a central feature of Giussani’s account,

---

<sup>99</sup> “Moral Life and the Magisterium of the Church,” in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, art. 3, §§ 2030-2031.



what role does it give the proclamation of revelation and the prayerful worship of the Church? There can be all sorts of “before” that prefigure one's discovery of the Church. The problem is more serious: the Movement can begin to seem a substitute for the Church.

### CONCLUSIONS

To understand that from the 1950s, within large segments of Italian society, individuals began to find it incomprehensible to see themselves as Catholics in the way their parents had, preferring to think and act on Marxist terms, and to recall that, ever since the *Risorgimento*, Northern Italy had grown increasingly anti-clerical and secular, is to understand why Giussani avoided expounding the faith from tradition, adopting the human person – his cares and worries – as his primary point of departure instead. Giussani's approach, existential and ultimately more sympathetic than its scholastic forerunners, was deemed a viable path to the transcendent, one which was able also to secure the best results for the subject's freedom.

Methodologically, in posing the question of transcendence in terms of why one should assent to the Catholic faith, Giussani pursues an epistemological line of enquiry. Certitude, the goal of this enquiry, necessitates the application of a method suited to its goal. And since religion deals with what is most resonant with the constitutive needs of the human person, the method for knowing the religious fact is to reflect on one's “I.” By extension, doing what a Catholic does in the moral shaping of society is contingent on knowing and understanding why the religious point of view is authoritative from the human point of view. The consummate shift from liturgy to politics, to cite one example, plays into the effort of individuals and small enterprises to harmonize the clash of secular and sacred points of view (civil society).

Giussani builds his argument for religion in the secular sphere around the authoritative deliveries of self-reflection. First, all questions of meaning and purpose are religious questions; real questions in civil society are religious questions; therefore questions pertaining to civil society are religious questions. Second, all religious questions are humanly relevant questions; questions that arise in civil society are religious questions; therefore civil society questions are humanly relevant

questions. The process ultimately takes the individual or community's self-reflection for taking something to be authoritative as the grounds for taking something to be sacred.

For reasons tied to history and context, Giussani seeks an intrinsic ground for the moral shaping of society: "a society more adequate to the needs of the heart." Rather than make provisions for rival intuitions, such as discursive reason and practical deliberation, the community provides the "energy" by which to remain faithful to the original encounter. The experience, then, assumes priority over language, history and culture. But outside of language, history, and culture, moral deliberation and argument would be inconceivable. Persons learn how to be Christian in practical terms through Scripture and tradition. And this differs from tackling moral dilemmas on the grounds of knowing that one is a Christian because of an encounter, or acting Christianly because of the duty owed to the "presence" encountered. Indeed, it is through Scripture and tradition that the conception of communion is understood in terms of the prayerful worship of Christ in the liturgy and contemplation on the Divine Word. These practices, intrinsic to the tradition, are the ordinary ambit of theological reflection on freedom and the moral shaping of an organized society.

Truth, in the sense underscored in John 8:32, is indeed the object of rational thought, which freedom serves. But Giussani adheres to the epistemological side of truth, and therefore, its general side, having to do with explanation and understanding, rather than with thought directed toward action. Its practical side is not negated, to be sure. He would agree with Aristotle, for instance, that "for the theorist, truth is a scientific explanation, for the ethical deliberator, it is a good rational choice, for the craftsman, it is right technical decision."<sup>100</sup> Giussani, however, does not consider what the practical attainment of different ends in relation to an undeniable truth might require. Such a consideration might have demonstrated the relationship of truth to human character, for instance; i.e., whether a person has the wherewithal to stand by the truth even at grave personal cost, rather than to

---

<sup>100</sup> Cf. "Realism dictates that, in order for an object to be observed and so to be known, the method must not be imagined, thought of or schematized and created by the subject: it must be imposed by the object (*RS*, 5 [My translation] )." For Aristotle's conception of the correspondence between varieties of method to varieties of end see the lucid account of "Practical Truth" in Sarah Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 219-225.

abandon truth for convenience, rests on habits acquired rather than rational grounds attained through rigorous testing of hypotheses, i.e., seeking a correspondence with the “I.” The simple predication of action on self-reflection can be a means to avoiding commitment in a grave moral dilemma most of all, “dressing up as moral choice what is really a *de facto* preference.” Thought directed to action concerns the relationship of intermediate ends to the ultimate horizon of things. Pondering alternatives ascertains where our obligation ultimately lies.<sup>101</sup> Tradition equips its progeny with resources and tools with which to evaluate the worthiness of intermediate ends to final ends. But it also presupposes that persons are more than just the subjects of appetite (*epitumia*), temper (*thumos*), and wish (*boulēsis*). In other words, we attribute to persons the ability to form “second-order desires,” i.e., to want to be moved by certain desires, or “second order volitions,” i.e., to want certain first-order desires to be the ones which move them to action.<sup>102</sup>

“How” questions, concerning the practical attainment of particular ends, attend the answers of wisdom, while “why” questions, concerning principles of action, attend the answers of law. Wisdom too is thoughtful, but in a manner that differs from experience, intuition, and rational testing. The questions wisdom handles do not concern why we hold to be true that which already unites us, but what we ought to do in a morally difficult situation in light of what we already hold to be true. Wisdom presupposes one’s prior induction in language, culture, history, and tradition (for where else would the embedded and embodied individual be?), while it does not exclude rival intuitions or disagreement among its interpreters. Its own tools, however, afford the possibility of deep reflection and argument. Wisdom draws on historical precedent, foresight, fact-gathering, and good counsel, in addition to prayer, intuition and consensus about the good. For Catholic theology, not one of these is available from outside of the institutional framework of the Church, comprising the systematic and logical use of Scripture as a key to understanding and answering practical and concrete human problems.

---

<sup>101</sup> I am thinking in particular of *City of God*, Book XIX. For a commentary on the relation of practical ends to the ultimate horizon as the relation of morals to the shaping of society, see Oliver O’Donovan, “The Political Thought of the *City of God* 19,” in *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 48-72.

<sup>102</sup> Charles Taylor, “Responsibility for the Self” in *Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 111-126; here 111, following Henry Frankfurt, “Freedom of the Will and The Concept of a Person” in *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-20.

The account I have just given of deliberation and argument in moral dilemmas could pass as a description of Giussani's intended account of freedom where the acting person is an agent whose choices reflect his depth, the seriousness with which he takes life. Throughout this chapter I have tried to excavate the tendencies frustrating Giussani's attempt to provide practical and concrete answers by which to live regarding questions of religion, politics, and God. Giussani's indebtedness to self-reflective epistemology and Hegel have given us insight into the problem and its hard won resolution. On the one hand, the "I" and "humanity" introduce into moral dilemma a standard of reflection that deploys "the language of evaluative distinctions," as Charles Taylor puts it; e.g., "noble or base, integrating or fragmenting, courageous or cowardly, clairvoyant or blind, and so on." And this means that qualitative reflection, such as between two different ways of conceiving of an organized society, can be characterized contrastively; and indeed, as Taylor says, "it can be the case that we must do so if we are to express what is really desirable in the favoured alternative."<sup>103</sup> To avoid the contrast on the basis of some utility-calculus or for lack of nerve is to evade the truth and so to choose unfreedom, for one is not free by avoiding an inconvenience posed by adhering to the truth. The depth Giussani cultivates in his readers by introducing the language of strong evaluations is effective, to a point. The account fails to hold up, on the other hand, where Giussani assimilates first nature and second nature so that the distinction between 'second-order' desires (e.g., to want to be married) and 'second-order volitions' (to want to act honourably and courageously in a morally difficult circumstance) is levelled. The result generates confusion in the deliberations of the practitioners of Giussani's method, creating the need to invoke the Magisterium against moral chaos. Moreover, the absence of an account of virtue-cultivation presumes more of human beings than is often possible when the conditions of belief and action are compounded by unforeseen circumstances and grave dangers. And yet, the depth Giussani cultivates in his readers is capable of inspiring enough interest in the transcendent ideals of Christian life that practitioners of his method find it "reasonable" – attractive even – to deepen their encounter with the Church, to

---

<sup>103</sup> Taylor, "Responsibility for the Self," 113.

allow the Church to draw them into its life where the work CL does not carry is received through the Church as gift and grace.

## CHAPTER THREE

## Beauty

*Don Giussani era cresciuto in una casa – come dice – povera di pane, ma ricca di musica, e così dall'inizio era toccato, anzi ferito, dal desiderio della bellezza e non si accontentava di una bellezza qualunque, di una bellezza banale: cercava la Bellezza stessa, la Bellezza infinita, e così ha trovato Cristo, in Cristo la vera bellezza, la strada della vita, la vera gioia.*  
— Joseph Ratzinger (2005)<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

## Preamble

Beauty, both as charism and concept, survives as one of Giussani's most distinctive legacies to the movements and associations he founded. Giussani was first "struck" by beauty in his youth, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger pointed out at Giussani's funeral, where his exposure to music, art, and literature, particularly Leopardi's poem *Alla sua donna*, made plain the intrinsic relation of beauty to truth.<sup>2</sup> Ratzinger was effectively echoing an earlier observation he had made in the "Introduction" to Camisasca's history of the CL movement: "The blade of beauty, so to speak, cut [Giussani] to the point of opening within him a metaphysical wound."<sup>3</sup> Beauty was a determinant in the decisions and actions of Giussani's life. Giussani often summarized the essential importance of beauty borrowing the phrase from St. Thomas Aquinas: *pulchrum splendor veritatis*.<sup>4</sup> With time, this phrase would be elaborated through countless examples in lectures, articles, and books, and embodied

<sup>1</sup> "Father Giussani grew up in a home – as he himself said – poor as far as bread was concerned, but rich with music, and thus from the start he was touched, or better, wounded, by the desire for beauty. He was not satisfied with any beauty whatever, a banal beauty, he was looking rather for Beauty itself, infinite Beauty, and thus he found Christ, in Christ true beauty, the path of life, the true joy" (Joseph Ratzinger, "Funeral Homily for Msgr. Giussani," in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 31.4 [2004]: 685–687).

<sup>2</sup> For the significance of Leopardi's poem in Giussani's life see Massimo Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione*, vol. 1: *Le origini, 1954-1968* (Cinisello Balsamo [Milan]: Edizioni San Paolo, 2001), 61–68.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "Introduzione del cardinale Joseph Ratzinger," in *Comunione e Liberazione*, vol. 1, *Le origini, 1954-1968*, 6. See also Massimo Camisasca, "L'attrattiva della bellezza," in *Don Giussani: la sua esperienza dell'uomo e di Dio* (Milan: San Paolo, 2009), 17–20.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. "Pulchritudo consistit in duobus, scilicet in splendore, et partium proportionem. Veritas autem habet splendoris rationem et aequalitas tenet locum proportionis [...]" (Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis* I, d. 3, q. 2, a. 3. expos.).

in the “gestures” of *Communion and Liberation* and *Memores Domini*,<sup>5</sup> where it remains a staple of theological reflection.<sup>6</sup> Thus, from his own experience, Giussani strove to attune his young interlocutors, through teaching and example, to the affective and emotional dimension of living critically, rendering the “possibility of beauty” intrinsic to the definition of the human person, and by extension, to the authentically religious man or woman.

Beauty, according to Giussani, applies, above all, to the possibility of an encounter between two subjects that gestures at something beyond them – a beyond that is infinite, the existence of the Infinite Original. At the annual *Meeting for Friendship Among Peoples* in Rimini, for instance, art, music, and natural beauty refract through Giussani’s account of beauty in order to connect the most satisfying experiences in life with God. In this sense, beauty is a gift, a gratuitous sign, adapted to man’s emotional and affective needs and demonstrative of God’s preferential love for man. In humanitarian projects, such as those undertaken by the *Fondazione Cometa* in Como, an arm of CL, beauty is communicated through a variety of media (painting, sculpture, and garden) to evidence God’s love to children who hail from troubled backgrounds, far removed from gratuitous expressions of love. Beauty, therefore, never instantiates itself in CL sentimentally, as *ars gratia artis*, but as a means to accessing life’s most important intuitions concerning destiny, as well as to transforming concrete cases of daily hardship into opportunities for hope and human growth.

Giussani’s Italian biographer, Massimo Camisasca, names three factors that shaped Giussani’s development of the concept of beauty: an innate predisposition to seek the beautiful from an early age; his long and vast exposure to music, art, and

---

<sup>5</sup> The Association known as *Memores Domini* is officially recognized by the Holy See as an international lay association. It unites the members of Communion and Liberation who follow a vocation of total dedication to God while living in the world. “The principal factors of the life of the *Memores Domini* are contemplation, understood as tending to keep one’s mind constantly trained on Christ, and mission, i.e., the passion for carrying the Christian announcement into the life of all men” (“*Memores Domini*,” in [http://www.clonline.org/memores/memoresEng.htm], accessed October 13, 2009). The official description of the Association, including the most salient details of its history, identity, and organization, can be found in the *International Associations of the Faithful: Directory* (DIAF), published by the Pontifical Council for the Laity (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006).

<sup>6</sup> Dozens of the most recent articles on beauty can be found in *Litterae Communionis—Tracce: Rivista Internazionale di Comunione e Liberazione*, the international magazine of *Communion and Liberation*. These can be searched online at <http://www.tracce.it>.

literature, particularly the Romantic artists, poets, and composers; and his instruction under Gaetano Corti at Venegono Seminary.<sup>7</sup> The latter influence, which had the greatest impact on beauty's conceptual development, provided the hermeneutical lens through which Giussani interpreted encounters, recommending it *a posteriori* to his audience on the presumed basis of their sharing his questions and concerns. Giussani summarized Corti's insight into beauty, and its indebtedness to St. Thomas Aquinas, as follows:

through [Don Corti's] style we came to understand the phrase he so often quoted from Thomas Aquinas, "beauty is the splendour of truth" (*pulchrum splendor veritatis*). [...] This phrase was at the heart of what made Corti's lectures so fascinating: the heart's exultation for Christian truth. He spoke of this exultation as running through one's entire being: intellect, feeling, and will. Inspired by this saying, Corti himself delivered his own lectures with clarity, simplicity and vigorous affection.<sup>8</sup>

Furnished with this framework, Giussani proceeded on the conviction, confirmed heuristically from childhood through seminary, that the propositions of faith, which involve truth and goodness, and appeal respectively to mind and will, could just as easily strike the heart through beauty. If this were so, grasping the truth would be a matter of the heart. According to Giussani, the heart was a higher faculty than the understanding and the will, because it was responsible for generating the innate desire for God.<sup>9</sup>

Faith, which stems from the heart, according to Giussani, is infused with a "personal reason," if reason means man's capacity to acknowledge an exigency for transcendence that reverberates from the depths of the *homo interior*, i.e., beyond the operations of logic alone. Faith is a response given to man by an external Reality, Giussani would say, tailored to his most profound needs and exigencies – needs and exigencies, he might say, that are personal insofar as they include an emotional and affective component that have a *for me* and a *for you* quality. Giussani's sensitivity to questions of personal relevance leads him to approach the act of faith existentially

---

<sup>7</sup> Massimo Camisasca, "L'attrattiva della bellezza," 17-20.

<sup>8</sup> "Corti, maestro di CL," in *Litterae Communis—Tracce: Rivista Internazionale di Comunione e Liberazione*, XVII, 1 (January 1990), 23; quoted in Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione*, vol. 1, *Le origini, 1954-1968*, 82.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Camisasca, "L'attrattiva della bellezza," 17.



(rather than only doctrinally). His focus on existence opens transcendence to the immediate concerns of daily life, rendering faith humanly sympathetic, and allowing him to repair, according to his expressed intent, the abstract philosophical tendency of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment philosophy to reduce doctrine to law.

The effort Giussani makes to depict Christianity as an embodied presence in the world – one capable of meeting the emotional and affective needs of the human person – is typical of the school of “incarnational theology” to which Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990), Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) belonged. In the writings of Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990), for instance, with which Giussani was familiar, the concept of Incarnation was both a process and a law of history (and not only the event in Bethlehem where God, the Word, became flesh).<sup>10</sup> A central feature of Chenu’s theology, the law of Incarnation rules the whole of history and especially the role of the Church in the world. It was used to describe the ecclesial effort through the ages to incorporate the concrete character of existence (e.g., space and time, particular and universal, humanity and society) into theology.

Beauty, a constituent of incarnational theology, serves as the affective stimulus by which to measure the tangibility (i.e., relating to the flesh) of the Christian response to man’s existential needs. While the concept of beauty, in Giussani’s account, retains its scholastic status as a transcendental in relation to unity, goodness, and truth, it announces an “incarnational” theme, as it were, by means of which modern consciousness is permitted to achieve a transcendent state in the world through the senses (i.e., “with the fullness of humanity”). The act of gazing at reality is to unveil its beauty from the depths and so to dwell in the present moment before a real presence. The subject’s basic stance of openness is one of “original awe.” His awe before a presence that both strikes and fulfils is what permits him to look at reality with “affection.” The depth of the subject’s gaze draws a deeper meaning out of everything that happens, generating hope, deepening faith, and completing the human person in the process through the manifestation and reception of love.

---

<sup>10</sup> Christophe Potworowski, “Incarnation and Christology,” in *Contemplation and Incarnation* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen’s, 2001), 196-225; here 197, 230.

Just as beauty serves to render the act of faith a significant event in the flesh, it addresses Giussani's pastoral concerns centred on impersonal representations of the Church. Attempts to transcend the body, to extricate feeling and emotion from the act of judgement, have long dogged Catholic theology. Beauty stands as a reminder of the important role that our emotional and affective responses have for the act of judgement and the search for truth and certainty. The capacity of beauty to strike awe in the person is analogous to the capacity of God to reveal himself. Moreover, since revelation entails an emotional and affective response (carried through the vehicles of experience, encounter, and event), beauty is an ingress to God's temple in time (*il tempio nel tempo*). In the most concrete situations of ordinary life, beauty opens the possibility of reading experience (good and bad) as ordered and harmonized within God's plan from all eternity. "Synthesis," Giussani says, "is the condition for [life's] analysis (*TA*, 44-48)!"

### The Occasion of the Text

The chapter will draw mainly from *Affezione e dimora* (*AD*), a collection of informal conversations which Giussani held with the women's branch of *Memores Domini* from 1990 to 1991.<sup>11</sup> They belong to a series entitled *Quasi Tischreden*, a name Giussani chose to highlight their stylistic resemblance to Martin Luther's "table-talks." The conversations in *Affezione e dimora* were occasioned by questions concerning fraternal life in community, such as affective attachments. Beauty addresses many of the concerns in an informal manner. The style of the text reflects Giussani's use of the *maieutic* method – the attempt to draw answers out of the audience by interrogating them on answers that exist already in their minds and hearts, either innately or from prior experience.

### Exegetical Considerations

As with the other texts of the *Tischreden* series, the conversations in *Affezione e dimora* are meandering rather than systematic. Their content is eclectic, drawing from many disparate sources, including secular authors. Strands of high

---

<sup>11</sup> Luigi Giussani, *Quasi Tischreden*, vol. 5, *Affezione e dimora* (Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli). Henceforth, the title is abbreviated *AD*.

scholastic philosophy, for instance, which treat beauty as a transcendental and divine attribute, are interwoven with modern threads, such as authenticity and socialization, ideology and preconception, behaviourism and the ideal of objectivity in judgement. The phenomenological categories of perception, emotion, cognition, space, time, and aesthetics are used to expound post-war existential themes such as absurdity, anxiety, and identity, only to be amplified by medieval concepts such as being, essence, movement, contingency, and reciprocity. Thus, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), Henri Bergson (1859-1941), Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), Charles Péguy (1873-1914), and Vladimir Solov'ëv (1853-1900) are made to join hands with Augustine of Hippo (354-430), Peter Lombard (1100-1160), Thomas Aquinas (1215-1274), and Duns Scotus (1265-1308). While the *Tischreden* make only passing reference to these sources, their appearance in *Affezione e dimora* and in other parts of Giussani's vast bibliography testify to the author's attempt to demonstrate the instantiation of religious insight at every moment of human genius – musical, literary, scientific, and philosophical.

### Problem

Giussani's manner of answering questions, as just described, meets two of his objectives: He bolsters pastoral theology with the more robust appearance of impersonal accounts, drawing the attention of academic audiences who, following a seventeenth-century approach to natural science, seek to explain effects in terms of universal and axiomatic causes called the laws of nature. No doubt, this tendency accounts for CL's popularity among a certain intellectual *élite*, in the scientific community, above all. The call of *Gaudium et Spes* to adapt the ancient wisdom of the Church to modern times was a significant benchmark for Giussani.<sup>12</sup> His insistence that faith stems from a living encounter, i.e., from an experience of original awe "in front of a presence," the presentment of the beautiful in the Other, recommends a manner of worldly dwelling that joins faith and life, repairing the

---

<sup>12</sup> "[...] the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics. Some of the main features of the modern world can be sketched as follows." (*Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Vatican City: December 7, 1965, § 4).

attempt to dichotomise the spiritual and the temporal that some interpreters of *Gaudium et Spes* had mistakenly attempted (*MCL*, 57-58). Moreover, Giussani universalized his claims with the firm belief that the Christian fact generated humanizing insights for those both within and beyond the Christian tradition, as seen by the incorporation of the *capax Christi*, as it were, into his theological anthropology (*AD*, 124). The attempt to revitalize Christianity in all of these ways runs counter at times to the pragmatic thrust of his engagements with young interlocutors. For that reason, it is not uncommon to hear Giussani's readers in the School of Community digress from concrete discussions of how to live ordinary experiences in the light of faith, around which the meetings are supposed to be centred, to over-generalized descriptions of how to understand faith and life according to some dubious epistemology.

### **Hypothesis**

At the exegetical level, concern arises with Giussani's tendency to conflate two diverse modes of delivering answers to his audience. Giussani's readers came to him with pragmatic concerns related to their daily efforts to live as Christians, such as he had wanted. Giussani crafted answers to their problems from his vast repertory of philosophical, theological, and literary knowledge. He was asked to address a variety of issues covering mainly two areas: the theoretical understanding of the existential act of faith, and the attempt to reach the ideals of authenticity and fulfilment through practical steps in concrete situations. Giussani proceeds to address these concerns, he claims, by avoiding theory. In actual fact, however, he only restrains theory. The thrust of his efforts here, as throughout his bibliography, involve teaching his interlocutors to judge situations, seeking truth and certainty, through the heart. Nowhere does he systematically treat free will, grace, providence, and God's foreknowledge, let alone the relationship between heart, reason, and will. And yet, he relies on an implicit impersonal account of each of these to ground his delivery of practical-theories-to-live-by. Thus, in an explicit attempt to interweave theology with the concrete concerns of existence, his conversations vacillate between impersonal account and practical-theory-to-live-by. This vacillation renders certain passages inconsistent and vague.

If Giussani's readers are to find his texts satisfying, they must first adjust their expectations by acknowledging a number of conflicting techniques that render his writings vague. *First*, the feeble impersonal account mitigates the text's pretention of being philosophically robust, though the reader must realize that Giussani was a pastor and teacher, *in primis*, not a philosopher. *Second*, the attempt to answer concrete problems with practical-theories-to-live-by is accompanied by the tendency to theorize problems and seek solutions in universal and timeless truths, though the reader must realize that priests accustomed to the pulpit often speak in the mode of encyclicals and apostolic letters (not as counsellors, mentors, or intimate friends). *Third*, the attempt to mobilize universal and timeless truth by over-generalizing actual problems so as to fit them better to universals compromises the pragmatic purport of the text, undermining Giussani's effort to elaborate tailor-made solutions from the sources of tradition, though the reader must realize that, for Giussani, to mobilize universal and timeless truths was actually to set Christianity in motion, liberating it from stagnation and the mounting threat of relativism.

### **Purpose**

In this chapter, I ask whether Giussani's concept of beauty – including the related aspects of “existence,” “dwelling,” and “duration” – does not, in the end, make too much sense of human nonsense, evacuating time, circumstance, context, and language from real problems that arise and, with that, foreclosing on the possibility that life's untidier aspects may be addressed with the more sophisticated tools of his tradition. Giussani undertakes a necessary and difficult task in aiming for an existential theology. As generations of modern philosophers have recognized, particulars tend to upset projects strongly oriented to universals. If beauty is to serve certain pragmatic ends in the modern ecclesial setting, the account must also take into account the relationship of particulars to universals.

Giussani's explicit task also aims at moderating the drive for pure objectivity in the attempt to revitalize the Church. It can be argued that his emphasis on the subject's emotional and affective responses to the objects of the world, as conveyed in his account of beauty, go a long way to humanizing the relevance of doctrine. And yet, his account exhibits an endless striving for certainty, disambiguation, and

clarity that empties problems of their particular contents. What kind of emotional and affective reaction can there be to an answer that is wrought from an over-generalized problem? Can theology, say through beauty, still speak meaningfully as an over-resolved solution? Would Giussani ever be willing to settle in the unsettling shadows of sin and human fragility? Does he ask how we are to achieve determinate ends given that we are where we are, rather than ask why we are here and not there? And if he does not want to face the prevalence of crisis and uncertainty in the human predicament – in order, perhaps, to secure the ideal of transcendence – does he not dichotomize life and faith according to the very manner he finds alienating in the modern ecclesial setting?

### PLAIN-SENSE READING

The plain-sense reading of *Affezione e dimora* reveals multiple definitions of beauty operating in the text. I rehearse each one, culling data strewn over hundreds of pages and allocating them to categories deduced from Giussani's own writings. In order to amplify the plain-sense rehearsal of the text, I occasionally import materials from other parts of Giussani's bibliography. To adhere faithfully to the plain-sense alone, I reconstruct his account in a way that would be reasonably recognizable to any reader of the School of Community and to which any such reader could reasonably be expected to assent.

#### *Definitions of Beauty in Giussani's Texts*

What is beauty? Giussani uses the term in four different ways throughout his bibliography. The most foundational definition is worked out in *Affezione e dimora*.

1. "Beauty is that ultimate correspondence anticipated by the heart: the splendour of truth (*AD*, 68)." Once again, still in connection with truth, Giussani writes: "beauty brings you to truth, to desire and seek what is true, that truth which is final, which is destiny (*AD*, 68)."
2. In another work, expounding a brief quotation from Gregory of Nyssa (viz., "Concepts generate idols; only wonderment recognizes [Christ]."), Giussani defines beauty as "...the motivation for saying 'yes' to something which introduces itself into one's life, over and above every preconception: beauty

is a goodness that we may well be unable to define, but which we feel is the content of our rationale for making a more ‘serious’ decision [concerning something] which itself conveys beauty, i.e., faith, because faith is born from the recognition of a reason (*USD*, 151).”

3. Giussani illustrates the function of beauty in the life of the free and acting subject by interpreting the encounter of John and Andrew with Jesus in John 1: 35-40 (*AD*, 86-87). When Jesus enjoins John and Andrew to “come and see,” his words, according to Giussani, have the character of an invitation to be accepted, not of an ordinance to be obeyed. Thus, when John and Andrew decide to follow Jesus, it is not a command that wins their allegiance (for this would only be “moralistic”), but an encounter with a Presence whose essence reveals beauty (*AD*, 87). Accordingly, the episode in John 1: 35-40 demonstrates that the *sequela Christi* begins in a sense of belonging enabled by perception and recognition (*AD*, 135); that beauty is the object of that perception (cf. *AD*, 210); and that the act of following is initiated by a reflex of the heart provoked by the encounter with a presence that conveys beauty (*AD*, 180), even if later it requires the intellect and the will. Every vocation is born in this exact way, Giussani says: “A calling to discipleship does not depend on particular conditions, but comes about through an encounter with an exceptional presence in space and time. *Il tempio, nel tempo* (*TT*, 6).” Laws or rules, such as the Constitutions of the *Memores Domini Association*, or the Ten Commandments, enjoin on the individual only after a prior encounter has taken place through which the heart has been claimed by the beauty of a presence (*AD*, 160). In this way, Giussani grounds religious belief and practice in affection (*affezione*) for a presence, which is more certain, and thus more effective and lasting, than would be any abstract notion of truth or goodness (*AD*, 59-60).
4. In a biographical comment, Giussani equates beauty with being, describing it as a totalizing force in his life. He writes: “whether [beauty] had served as a memory persistently stimulating my thought, or as the stimulus for re-evaluating the banality of daily existence, my life as a youngster was totally invested by it. Every instant, from then on, was no longer banal for me.

Everything that existed – everything that was beautiful, true, attractive, fascinating (even only potentially so) – found its reason for being through beauty, as the certainty of [an undeniable] presence and a ennobling hope (*speranza nobilitatrice*) that wanted to embrace all that existed (AC, 33)."

From Giussani's statements on beauty, we learn that his question concerns what motivates the act of faith; viz., the reason for saying "yes" to a presence which introduces itself into one's life (AD, 456). That presence, for him, is "the nexus between Christ and everything that happens to me; the nexus of everything I encounter (AD, 97)." And the fruits of that encounter, he goes on to say, are always "existential" and "operative." Giussani's examples show that an encounter can be specified as a divine vocation, such as the call of John and Andrew to discipleship or the call of the *Memores Domini* to virginity (AD, 131). In each instance, the memory of the presence encountered results in "serious" claims on freedom (*grave responsabilità*) (AD, 231). Such claims come only from the truth that makes an ultimate claim on the subject's heart (AD, 65). "Beauty is the splendour of that truth (AD, 65)." Indeed, beauty is the first feature of the presence to strike the subject and so to intimate that truth which reverberates as the desire for ultimate satisfaction (AD, 69). (I shall return to the epistemological implications of this claim below). The subject's reaction to a presence, the desire to grasp and possess it, is his reaction to beauty and the motivation for deciding and acting in accordance with truth. Beauty's pragmatic function is to highlight the ultimate significance of everything that exists, in spite of suffering (AD, 115), so that through affection one's entire life may be shaped by truth. The relationship of beauty to life is underscored in the title of Giussani's longest reflections on the topic: *Affezione e dimora* (Affection and Dwelling).

#### *Beauty in relation to Sacrifice*

Giussani almost always discusses beauty in connection with sacrifice (esp. AD, 127-221). Sacrifice is mentioned in connection with uncovering the underlying origin and significance of things, lest the perceiving subject reduce goodness, in the act of apprehension, to some aesthetic and abstract value (AD, 211). Giussani



recommends affirming beauty according to the “order that it has with all things, not forgetting anything (AD, 85).” The word sacrifice itself, for Giussani, denotes the ascetical practice of detachment (*distacco*) required to seek and adhere to the truth (AD, 84). He illustrates the problem of attachment in friendship when it manifests itself as the desire to possess the other (AD, 250). True friendship, Giussani recognizes, can slide in the direction of possession, because it entails a “preference,” i.e., an attachment to and interest in the other. And yet, a “true” friendship, i.e., one generative of freedom and the discovery of the authentic *I*, can only flourish if the subject’s interest in the object is in some sense detached (AD, 84). He refers elsewhere to detaching oneself from pre-conceived notions of truth or reality, allowing what shows itself to be (AC, 76). This kind of detachment involves the subject’s “consciousness” of the relationship that preceded the friendship between the object and the one who made it (OCC, 90); namely, God. The convergence of subject, object, and God in time and space is the harmonious whole that includes all particulars (AD, 86).

#### *Truth precedes sacrifice*

Giussani is at pains to suggest that truth leads to sacrifice. Putting the order this way, he says, revolutionizes the common belief that sacrifice yields truth (AD, 84). If sacrifice is the condition for perceiving truth, Giussani does not say that it is demanded *for the sake of truth*. Truth exists apart from sacrifice; but sacrifice is the ascetical practice of detachment without which the true identity and value of an object, i.e., its beauty, cannot be seen (AD, 65, 89, 128). Truth is threatened by “attachment to falsehood” (*attacamento alla menzogna*), the “manipulation” of reality, and the “resistance to beauty” (*resistenza alla bellezza*) (AD, 66). Elsewhere, Giussani levels a more direct attack, specifically targeting political ideology: “Preconception confines itself to the familiar and expected, while ideology tends to attribute an aura of redemption and salvation to outlooks and practices which are well determined, dominated, and manipulated: ‘scientific,’ they say (RS, 97).” Truth’s victory over ideology, he explains, lies in beauty’s motivating power, its ability to persuade the subject, satisfying an ultimate desire, which is manifested in one’s affection for someone, and is consummated in the affirmation of the good

introduced into one's life through that someone (*AD*, 88). "Affection," he hastens to add, "is not a wave (*un onda*), though it may be that as well, but adhesion to the truth, ceaseless submission to the attractiveness of truth, becoming prisoners of the true, the beautiful, the good (*AD*, 88)." Sacrifice follows truth, then, specifically as it is motivated by the desire for beauty, i.e., "according to the order [beauty] shares with all things, its harmony, not forgetting anything (*AD*, 86)."

*The self-revelation and recognition of beauty in someone or something*

The plain-sense reading of beauty also marks the distinction between five epistemological moments. While these are not organized in sequential order, an order seems implied in the functions they perform in the text. For instance, it seems logical that something cannot be known, apprehended, and affirmed without first being encountered. At the same time, it is unclear that a sequence must be rigidly adhered to in executing Giussani's epistemology. My own organization of these epistemological moments need not be taken sequentially; their placement, however, was indeed derived from the logic of Giussani's discussion.

*Encounter (incontro)*

The encounter between a subject and an object is conducive to knowledge and truth. In this sense, an encounter constitutes the subject's intelligent rapport with reality (*USD*, 112).<sup>13</sup> First, the subject is "struck" (*colpito*) by someone or something, after which, with time and reflection, the true identity and value of the object comes to light. The biblical paradigm for such an event, according to Giussani, is found in John 1: 35-40, where John and Andrew meet Jesus (*AD*, 332). This passage, with its explicit relevance to Christian discipleship and vocation, illustrates what Giussani means by the term "encounter." First of all, the encounter is not a linguistic event; it is perceptive. Second, it involves an affective reaction to a presence, not an intellectual one. The interaction is meaningful when it takes on the character of an "event," i.e., by providing an orientation for decision and action

---

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *USD*, 112: "[il] nostro rapporto con la realtà sollecita l'umana intelligenza."

(*RVU*, 134).<sup>14</sup> The term “encounter” also extends to the meeting of a non-believer with a believer (*IRI*, 263). That which is decisive for the eventual conversion of the non-believer is not what is said (*apologetica*); but the presence that is met in the believer.<sup>15</sup> A conversion (*con-vertere*) is so called because it provides the non-believer with a new orientation terminating in a reality. Through it the meaning of all subsequent history refracts (*RVU*, 107, *IRI*, 263).

### *Gaze (sguardo)*

“The gaze takes notice of the presence by which the heart is struck (*AD*, 333).” Through the act of gazing, Giussani assigns a role to perception that goes beyond its mere ability to help us know objects and differentiate between them.<sup>16</sup> Gazing enables the subject to intuit a reality beyond this world, of which this world is but a sign (*AD*, 92-93). Gazing entails “going to the depths,” “seeing the totality,” “shattering the stone [that covers truth],” “perforating our resistance [to the truth],” and “detaching ourselves” from preconceptions, false-truths, and ideologies (*AD*, 211).

Giussani uses two biblical episodes to illustrate the freedom of the subject correlative to the gaze. First, the call narrative of Andrew and John illustrates the subject’s freedom to accept or reject reality. The question of whether to accept Christ’s invitation to follow him is determined not by a conversation (some appeal to the intellect or the will), but by a unique quality emanating from Christ himself, which John and Andrew saw through the manner in which he approached them: “John and Andrew – who did not speak with Jesus! – were stupefied there as they gazed at him as he was speaking: it was the Mystery that was communicating itself to them and they were beginning to understand a mere syllable, and it took nothing more than a mere syllable to bowl them over so that they could barely walk home (*AD*, 332).” The other biblical episode that brings the gaze into relation with freedom is that of Zacchaeus (Lk. 19: 2, 5, 8). This time, Giussani considers what it

<sup>14</sup> *RVU*, 134: “Per cui l’incontro è un «evento» che tende ad influire in maniera nuova su tutti i rapporti, con le cose e con gli uomini, e sul modo stesso che si ha di guardare ai propri peccati.”

<sup>15</sup> Luigi Giussani, “Questa cara gioia sopra la quale ogni virtù si fonda,” in *Esercizi Spirituali della Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione. Appunti dalle meditazioni*, Rimini 2-4 April 1993, suppl. *Litterae Communio*, 6 (1993): 1-80; here 40.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1.1.

means for two subjects to gaze into each other's hearts. "Jesus looks at a man and selects him: in this way Zacchaeus discovers Christ and follows his face (*va dietro alla sua faccia*) (*TA*, 248)." Giussani notices the reaction of Zacchaeus to Jesus' gaze and underscores the power that another's gaze can have on us. More specifically, from Zacchaeus' reaction, Giussani intuits that the gaze of Jesus touched a desire in Zacchaeus' heart. What moved Zacchaeus, Giussani clarifies, was the need to be loved by "one who knew and loved him for who he was (*OCC*, 54)." To deprive ourselves of the gaze with which Zacchaeus looked at Jesus and vice-versa, Giussani argues, is "to lose sight of the wondrous fact that everything is an event, i.e., that everything [that happens] is replete with meaning (*AD*, 210)."

#### *Awe (stupore)*

Awe, by its very nature, is the subject's first posture in front of reality, where reality is conceived as "presence": "If I were to open my eyes for the first time in this instant, emerging from my mother's womb, I would be overpowered by the wonder and awe of things as a 'presence' (*RS*, 100)." The subject's capacity to wonder at a presence is a "mystical attitude, which is the most natural to man, the most elementary aspect of awareness (*OCC*, 90)." It is the impetus behind the search for truth, beauty, and goodness (*AD*, 299), and it is manifested in the subject's constant groping for the foundation of truth: "'What is the ultimate meaning of existence?' or 'Why is there pain and death, and why, in the end, is life worth living?' Or from another point of view: 'What does reality consist of and what is it made for?' (*RS*, 45)." All of reality is undergirded by a greater and richer meaning that must be tapped: "Reality solicits me to engage in a search for something other – something beyond immediate appearances. It latches on to my consciousness, enabling me to pre-sense and perceive something else. Faced with the sea, the earth, the sky, and all things moving within them, I am impassive – I am animated, moved, and touched by what I see (*RS*, 101)."

For Giussani, awe is a "religious attitude," which surpasses the role Aristotle gives it in *Metaphysics* I (*RS*, 102). Bound up with the heart, awe is more than intellectual admiration, it is the "affirmation and development of attraction; [...] the wonder of a presence [that] attracts me (*RS*, 102)." Giussani names that presence a

gift (*donum*); *first*, because it is gratuitous, and *second*, because it acquires its significance to the extent that it is worthy to be an object of love (*RS*, 101, *AD*, 63). The gift's connection to the "religious sense" is sealed with the "I's" affirmation of a presence as gift (*AD*, 179). Through self-reflection, the subject becomes aware that he is not complete "unless [his consciousness] reaches the Foundation from which life springs; the span of reflection does not accomplish its whole dimension unless it arrives at the Point from which the 'I' springs forth with its gesture (*OCC*, 90)." God can be deduced from a presence, Giussani says, because "something cannot impact human intelligence without that very intelligence perceiving how something is, in some way, the sign of another reality [...]" (*USD*, 112, cf. *AD*, 112-113)."

#### *Affirming the True (affermando il vero)*

Each of the moments discussed up to now leads to the great occasion when truth is either affirmed or rejected. Giussani's focus is on the existential invitation to affirm truth with a "yes" (*dire «si»*), or to acknowledge it with a "Thou" (*dire «Tu»*) (*AD*, 91). In either case, affirmation, for Giussani, is "adhesion to being" and "affection for reality" (cf. *AD*, 238, 377).

Truth's affirmation operates in two spheres of a single reality.<sup>17</sup> The first sphere is theological, and derives from faith (*AD*, 83). The second is scientific, philosophical, mathematical, or what have you, and is but a part of the reality known through faith (*AD*, 94). The distinction between primary and secondary, then, underscores the foundational priority of theological truth in grasping the "fullness of reality" according to the "totality of its factors" (*AD*, 83, 94). In *Affezione e dimora*, and throughout his bibliography, Giussani writes about the kind of reality that may be known through faith, which is theological. In this sense, he uses the term "truth" as it is given in St. John's Gospel – though he is neither always explicit about this source, nor aware (it would seem) that he should also consider the different ways John himself uses the term. Nevertheless, Giussani clearly applies "truth" in some of the same ways John does: e.g., Truth as Christ (cf. Jn. 1: 17), Truth as the Word (cf. Jn. 1: 14), Truth as *telos* of action (cf. Jn. 14: 6; cf. Jn. 8: 12; 12: 35, 46), Truth as the

---

<sup>17</sup> Cf. "It is only the true encounter with Christ that changes the first encounter and makes it true. It is only faith that, changing the way you deal with reality, makes true the rapport you have with reality (*AD*, 94)."

Light amidst darkness (cf. Jn. 1: 5; 1 Jn. 1: 6), Truth and witness (cf. Jn. 5: 33; 19: 35), Truth as the litmus test of community (cf. Jn. 4:23; 17: 8), and Truth as indwelling Spirit (cf. Jn. 14: 17). Most significantly, Giussani links truth to freedom: i.e., the subject is fully free when faced with a truth he can either affirm or reject. While it is a matter of decision to affirm or reject the truth, freedom in the fullest sense is only realized with truth's affirmation (cf. Jn. 8: 32).<sup>18</sup>

Giussani also confronted the philosophical currents impeding the role of faith in post-war Italy by drawing on Hannah Arendt (1906-1975), whom he likely thought would be greeted favourably by his anti-clerical adversaries (*USD*, 112-113). The post-war philosophies, he observed through Arendt, obscured modern man's perception of reality (by which he also intended the Church and its teachings). A naive optimism was abroad, a kind of utopianism which was to be fully realized through the centralized implementation of perfected systems and structures (*USD*, 112-113).<sup>19</sup> The critique of ideology Giussani borrows from Arendt, still suggestive of the Johannine axiom that freedom is begotten from truth, supposedly replaces the language of systems and structures – be it Nietzschean/nihilist, Sartrean/existentialist, or Marxian/socialist – with common-sense realism.

*Grasping the True (la possessione del vero, del bello, del giusto, dell'amoroso, del felice)*

Once the subject has affirmed the real, he must integrate the truth it teaches into life. Giussani speaks of this moment as "possession," namely, acquiring truth under the aspect of the beautiful. Only by possessing truth may one draw on it as the basis for decision and action. "Possession," in connection with the beautiful, then, refers to the special manner in which truth itself is integrated into life (*AD*, 144-145). The word "possession," like "preference," has negative connotations in common parlance, which Giussani recognizes (*AD*, 144). He purposefully discusses both the positive and the negative, particularly with regards to inter-personal relationships, to repair the errant idea that truth and beauty only result from stoical detachment (*AD*, 402).

---

<sup>18</sup> See my *Chapter Two: Freedom*.

<sup>19</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Le origini del totalitarismo* (Milan: Edizioni Comunità, 1996), 649; Sartre, *La nausea* (Turin: Einaudi, 1990), 166, quoted in Giussani, *USD*, 112-113.

The care and interest one has for a friend, so Giussani says, is itself a form of possession, insofar as possession is a form of affective attachment, *preferenza* (*AD*, 68). According to another sense, possessiveness, which is excessive attachment, threatens freedom and destroys friendship. Detachment, then, is the ascetical practice (*sacrificio*) of loving the other with all the possessiveness that love entails without subsuming the other under one's own desire to determine history (*AD*, 66); or, in Bergson's sense of "duration" (*durata*), giving the other time and space to grow on his own terms (*AL*, 77).<sup>20</sup>

An object, then, may be possessed well or badly. The good or evil from which one acts in possessing is based on an ordered or disordered relationship with the object. An ordered relationship is established by one's concern for the other's destiny (cf. *AD*, 137). A disordered relationship results from the desire to manipulate (*AD*, 69, 363, 417). The case of possession in friendship turns out to be analogous to that of truth. If reality is possessed in such a way as to predetermine the outcome of a moral question before it has been asked, it is possessed badly. If reality is possessed in such a way as to allow for the dramatic, mysterious unfolding of truth, it is possessed well (*AD*, 173). In practice, the disordered possession of reality is false, moralistic, rationalistic, rule-bound, oppressive, violent, exclusive, and reductive (*AD*, 68-70). Its ordered possession is true, free, embodied, inclusive of human affect and emotion, and intrinsically generative and communicative (*AD*, 68-70).

Affection for reality, finally, is the ordered possession of truth (cf. *RVU*, 115). Love infuses the cognitive act of understanding and judgement with an emotional and affective response, rendering the act of faith, the love of a Presence, an act of obedience to the heart (*AD*, 194). Given that the truth must be loved, and not only obeyed, its integration into understanding through beauty is a higher level of appropriation than any Kantian call to duty (cf. *AD*, 149). The human desire to "possess" and "touch" reality is made possible precisely because the Truth, the Word made flesh, is ordered through beauty to inspire a tangible love (not to say "carnal"), rather than to motivate action through rational criteria (cf. *RVU*, 115).

---

<sup>20</sup> Giussani cites Henri Bergson, *Saggi sui dati immediati della conoscenza* (Turin: Borringhieri, 1964). Bergson wrote in French, so the term *durata* would have been *durée* in the original.

### DEEPER PLAIN-SENSE READING

Giussani's account of beauty makes distinctions that locate him within the matrix of numerous philosophical debates at a particular moment in the history of the Church and in the post-war Italian cultural milieu. His place within this matrix has to be determined with reference to the question of a determinate community of enquirers to which he was responding. The deeper plain-sense reading in this section attempts to reconstruct that question making use of history and intellectual biography.

#### *Revitalizing the Church through the Concept of Beauty*

Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) worked out an account of beauty with which Giussani had familiarized himself by the time he composed the talks in *Affezione e dimora*.<sup>21</sup> For both authors, beauty, a transcendental in the order of being, afforded the Church in its modern predicament a sympathetic way of revitalizing Christianity. This revitalization, Giussani and Balthasar agreed, depended in great measure on renewing life and faith within the institution first.

Beauty responds to a specific concern over the dwindling ability of the Church to address real questions in the lives of its faithful.<sup>22</sup> The Church had lost sympathy with its modern subject through heavy-handed authoritarianism and was slipping out of relevance in cultural and human matters due to a highly abstract and arguably outdated approach to reality (Giussani). Balthasar and Giussani both distanced themselves from the Thomism instituted in the seminaries through the anti-modernist campaign, which they believed was responsible for producing irrelevant theological commentaries on questions nobody was asking except, perhaps, the

<sup>21</sup> Balthasar and Giussani were friends and discussed together various facets related to the founding of CL and *Memores Domini*, such as the consecration of lay people. (Related to the author in a interview with Paolo Martinelli, OFM Cap., August 30, 2008 [Antonianum, Rome] ). Giussani cites Balthasar, most of all, in *Alle origini della pretesa Cristiana*, translated by Viviane Hewitt as *At the Origins of the Christian Claim* (Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's, 1998). See also Giussani's expression of gratitude to Balthasar for the establishment of CL for university students in Switzerland in Luigi Giussani, *Il movimento di Comunione e Liberazione: Conversazioni con Robi Ronza* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1987), 160.

<sup>22</sup> See especially Gerald McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977). Relevant historical studies include Darrell Jodock, ed., *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Theology and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Ninian Smart, ed, et al., *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).



metaphysicians themselves. The systematic attempt, mobilized by *Aeterni Patris* (1879),<sup>23</sup> and subsequently reinforced through *Pascendi* (1907), the *Oath against Modernism* (1910), *Doctoris Angelici* (1914), *The 24 Thomistic Theses* (1914), and *Humani Generis* (1950), to safeguard the realm of speculative theology on the basis of metaphysical system-building resulted, from Balthasar's point of view, in the production of an entirely irrelevant and impersonal theology: "sawdust Thomism."

Neither Giussani nor Balthasar ever directly criticized the papal pronouncements on the "perennial philosophy" of Thomas Aquinas, but both had difficulty digesting "metaphysical system-building" in light of questions facing the Church in the modern world. Those questions, asked by the Church's faithful, seemed to cry for a more existential and personalist approach to expounding the faith – one ultimately more sympathetic to the human person. Interestingly, both Giussani and Balthasar wished expressly to remain "faithful" to Thomas. Giussani once referred to CL as a specifically Thomist-inspired lay movement, to emphasise that it was specifically *not* of Neo-Thomist provenance (*MCL*, 29).<sup>24</sup> Certain interpretations of Thomas, above all – very likely the Suarezianism taught in Jesuit seminaries of the time – were found inept and ineffectual before the secularist challenge to religion and religious institutions. Giussani's ongoing polemic against abstract philosophy, the category to which he consigned Neo-Thomism, could be seen in his open esteem for Bergson and other philosophers who ventured far beyond the *24 Thomistic Theses*.

While Thomas's own treatment of beauty was marginal,<sup>25</sup> the prominence of the concept of beauty in twentieth-century theological reflection grew in significance contemporaneously with Balthasar's and Giussani's reflections. Modern theologians who turned to the concept of beauty looked to it as a stimulant for the renewal of faith in the lives of thousands of Catholics alienated by an approach to faith that had become, through institutional practices, impersonal and sterile. Beauty, a

---

<sup>23</sup> For a relevant discussion of the historical context and repercussions on Catholic theology see McCool, *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism*, 226-240.

<sup>24</sup> For a commentary on Neo-Scholasticism and Neo-Thomism, and the influence of Francisco Suárez's (1548-1617) interpretations of Thomas as used in the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), see Gerald McCool, *The Neo-Thomists* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press & Association of Jesuit University Presses, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> See Armand Maurer, *About Beauty: A Thomistic Interpretation* (Houston, TX: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1983).

humanizing element running against the grain of Soviet communism, was a major point of reflection through the writings of Karol Wojtyła (1920-2005). Joseph Ratzinger (1927- ), from the cultural and liturgical perspective, however, sought to reintroduce the concept of beauty in the life of the Church.<sup>26</sup> While it is hard precisely to calibrate Wojtyła and Ratzinger's influence on Giussani,<sup>27</sup> each of these theologians treated the desire for and attraction to beauty as a means to rekindling the desire for and attraction to truth and God.

For Giussani, beauty provided a way to ground the act of faith in the heart of the human person as an intrinsic answer to innate needs and exigencies. Not only was beauty a transcendental in the ontological order of being, connected to the search for truth and the attraction to the good; what made it a generative area of theological reflection, for Giussani, was the obvious fact that nobody wished to live without beauty – that beauty, somehow, seemed to respond to an inner need for... something more. Balthasar, in similar fashion, appealed to beauty to make allowance for affection, imagination, and desire in the act of faith, expanding the parameters of epistemology beyond the limited, though more traditional, focus on the intellect and will. The faculty of the heart, for both authors, played a significant role in the attempt to restore “dynamism” to the Catholic understanding of faith (AD, 183).

Giussani's pastoral sensitivity to younger generations of Catholics, in particular, presented him with the task of rendering revelation and sacred tradition pertinent to the concerns of daily life.<sup>28</sup> Balthasar was motivated by a similar set of concerns in his revitalization of theology over and against “sawdust Thomism.” In both cases, what originally began as a specific answer to a particular problem in the institutional life of the Church was ultimately recommended to a universal audience.

---

<sup>26</sup> Ratzinger's focus, however, in contrast to the thinkers already named, typically centred on the significance of beauty to cultural and liturgical matters, rather than anthropological questions. See Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 133-134.

<sup>27</sup> Four of Ratzinger's works, translated into Italian, are cited in *Affezione e dimora*. They are *Chiesa, ecumenismo e politica. Nuovi saggi di ecclesiologia* (AD, 212, 244); “Intervento di presentazione del nuovo Catechismo,” in *L'Osservatore Romano* (January 20, 1993) (AD, 194); “Presentazione,” in L. Giussani, *Un avvenimento di vita, cioè una storia* (AD, 77); *Una compagnia sempre reformanda* (AD, 424).

<sup>28</sup> Luigi Giussani, *Scuola Quaderni: Appunti*, Cesenatico, October 2, 1971. Scuola Quaderni was the first name given to the School of Community. The most pertinent comments are quoted in Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione: Le Origini –1954-1968*, 96-97.

The shape and organization of materials in the theological texts of both authors retrieve the existential and pragmatic purport of faith with a view to conveying the Church's sympathetic regard for the human condition. Beauty targeted two areas calling for repair: (1) the intellectualistic grounding of belief and practice, as typified by the abstract conceptualism of "sawdust Thomism" mentioned above; and (2) the grounding of belief and practice in moral criteria as emphasised in the manualist tradition of moral theology, particularly its suspicion of the affections and emotions, and its unhealthy focus on the Fourth and Sixth Commandments.<sup>29</sup> Beauty addressed both targets by allowing our affective/emotional reactions to factor into the act of faith. Beauty was meant to do repair to this defective area of theology without detracting from the traditional importance accorded to *understanding* and *obedience*. Giussani's conversations on beauty explicitly address the relation of affection to understanding and obeying.

#### *Transcendental Thomism and the Act of Faith*

A variety of interpretations of Thomas Aquinas flourished in the wake of the Thomist revival initiated by Pope Leo XIII. The Jesuit philosophers at the *Institut Supérieur de Philosophie* in Leuven had developed an interpretation of Thomas that became known as Transcendental Thomism.<sup>30</sup>

The thrust of Transcendental Thomism, such as it was given by Pierre Rousselot (1846-1924) and Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944), involved restoring the existential dimension to the act of faith. The novel approach taken by these Jesuits – derived from Kant rather than Thomas – attempted "to search out the necessary *a priori* conditions for the possibility of the inner life and the human spirit in its activities of thinking and willing."<sup>31</sup> The emphasis was on understanding the form

---

<sup>29</sup> Cf. French psychologists who referred to the so-called "*maladie catholique*" had in mind the "prurient boarding school masters who traumatized teenagers with threats of eternal punishment for moments of impurity" and "the pre-conciliar marriage manuals which reduced the whole complex territory of sexuality to a calculus of material dues and contractual obligations" (Tracy Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 69).

<sup>30</sup> The *Institut Supérieur* in Leuven was founded under the direction of Désiré-Joseph Mercier (1851-1926). For the historical context, see McCool, "Epilogue," in *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism*, 241-267.

<sup>31</sup> Norris Clarke, "The Turn to the Inner Way in Contemporary Neo-Thomism," in *The Philosophical Approach to God: A Neo-Thomist Perspective* (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: Wake Forest University, 1979), 13.

rather than the content of human thinking, just as in Giussani's case, through *The Religious Sense*, the method of investigation is emphasised more than the theological truth-claims of the tradition itself. Emphasis on the form of thinking led to the role of intuitions in positing God "as the necessary *a priori* condition of the dynamism of human intelligence."<sup>32</sup> But this was only made possible by presupposing the *desiderium naturale videndi Deum* – a concept recovered from the excavation of Patristic sources.<sup>33</sup> Balthasar, a former Jesuit, made his own use of the concept of an intuition for God. And those of Giussani's professors who had received their philosophical training at the Pontifical Gregorian University (Rome's Jesuit university), such as Gaetano Corti (1910-1989), as well as those discussing intuition in their publications, such as Carlo Colombo (1909-1991), seem to have exerted the most influence on Giussani.<sup>34</sup>

In developing the concept of beauty, particularly, both Giussani and Balthasar (himself a Jesuit by training) drew inspiration from Transcendental Thomism. Its focal point was the nature of being and the relation between beings generally and Being in principle. It incorporated into the understanding of being the whole Platonic conception of the emanation of the good (*bonum est diffusivum sui*), and, therefore, also of the beautiful and the true. Under this lens, all objects were seen as self-sharing, self-revealing, self-communicating. The philosophical foundation of community, communion one could say, so prominent to the writings of both authors, was also based on the self-communicative structure of being. Giussani and Balthasar appropriate this ontology and credit Thomas Aquinas with the insight, rather than his Jesuit interpreters (*AD*, 234).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Norris Clarke, "The Turn to the Inner Way in Contemporary Neo-Thomism," 13.

<sup>33</sup> The *desiderium naturale videndi Deum*, and its accompanying intuitionism, characterized the *nouvelle théologie* and *ressourcement* pioneered by Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) and Jean Daniélou (1905-1974). For a discussion of its specific relevance to Giussani see Massimo Camisasca, *Don Giussani: La sua esperienza dell'uomo e di Dio*, 30-31.

<sup>34</sup> Carlo Colombo, Giussani's seminary professor, makes extensive comments on Rousselot's *L'intellectualisme de Saint Thomas* (Paris, 1908), through which he carefully frames certain concepts such as "personal encounter" and the supernatural recognition of God. While Colombo recalls Rousselot's troubles with the ecclesiastical censors, he himself seems to offer a positive endorsement. See "Il problema della fede," in *La scuola cattolica*, LXXIV (1946), 292-313, especially "La teologia dell'atto di fede nei teologi contemporanei," § 2, 299-306.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. "A being has meaning only if it has being-for-itself, but this being-for-itself is meaningful only if it possesses the movement of communication. What is more, being-for-oneself and communication are one and the same thing; together they constitute the one, indivisible illumination of being. But this implies that the meaning of being consists in love, and that, in consequence, knowledge can be

The reworking of Thomas's philosophy on the basis of the transcendental properties of being, became the basis of Balthasar's "theological aesthetics." David C. Schindler reads Balthasar's Thomism through Heidegger,<sup>36</sup> from whom Transcendental Thomists drew some of their insights. Schindler roots beauty's significance in the act of faith, which is also Giussani's principal theological interest. From the idea of being as self-positing gift, Balthasar and Giussani both centre the act of faith on beauty. Beauty, a central feature of the gift's self-communicative structure, is integral to perceiving and apprehending reality. In a particular way, Balthasar's concept of *Gestalt*, in the scholastic sense of *splendor formae*, is based on this self-communication and is directly related by both authors to the *affective*, and not simply to the intellectual grasp of reality. The salient propositions in Balthasar's thought that cast light on Giussani's are the following:

1. The nature of being is self-revelatory. Hence, being axiomatically posits an act of "unveiling between subjects and objects," and thus involves "an analytical relation to someone who recognizes it in its unveiling."<sup>37</sup>
2. The concept of being's self-revelation leads to a presupposition about truth: "Truth is apprehensible and, in a more limited sense, rational, insofar as being discloses itself and, in so doing, really gives itself as it is."<sup>38</sup>
3. The necessary and especially close connection between axiom and presupposition leads to a conclusion concerning beauty as a mode of being, viz., "[...] this radiant property of truth, which overwhelms by its splendour, its indivisible integrity, and its perfect expressive power is, in fact, none other than beauty."<sup>39</sup> Balthasar goes on to extol beauty's virtues in more poetic terms: it is apprehended only in direct intercourse; it is ever ancient and ever new; it radiates to the surface from the centre of being; it renders truth always intrinsically a matter of grace; it is a gift that could never thoroughly be digested or systematized.<sup>40</sup>

---

explained only by and for love" (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, I: Truth of the World*, translated by Adrian J. Walker [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985], 111).

<sup>36</sup> David C. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I: Truth of the World*, 38.

<sup>38</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I: Truth of the World*, 39.

<sup>39</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I: Truth of the World*, 141-142.

<sup>40</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I: Truth of the World*, 142-158.

The features of Balthasar's explicit or plain-sense logic of beauty can be detected in the plain-sense of Giussani's account. And yet, the deeper meaning of Giussani's text, namely the worry he is addressing, still needs to be brought out. In addition to relying on a shared ontology for clues, I solicit Balthasar's help both because he and Giussani make use of the same categories when discussing beauty, and because the presence of signs within the text indicate that both authors appeal to beauty to address the same kinds of pragmatic concern. These are the concerns taken up by Catholic theology in the years surrounding the Second Vatican Council and listed in *Gaudium et Spes* under the rubric of existential anxiety, and which found expression in a basic openness to modernity.<sup>41</sup> The categories I set out to examine in relation to existential anxiety are "gazing", "asceticism", and "the heart." But before going on to discuss these items in detail, I want briefly to touch on the specific historical context out of which the discussion on beauty emerges.

Within this triadic relation, what role does beauty play and what importance does it have *en face* of Giussani's sensitivity to the pastoral needs of the young? I have listed three areas. (1) Beauty offers a new way of articulating what is understood by the act of faith that obviates a reduction of faith to rational assent. (2) The concept of beauty was meant to salvage the particular dreams and desires of the individual by incorporating them into the universal goals of the community, meaning the local Church or the Church at large. Such incorporation was not to be achieved by making a series of easy trade-offs. Giussani, I will show later, does not spell out his alternative to easy trade-offs, leaving his reader without the tools to achieve practical ends. (3) Through beauty, Giussani hoped to equip theology with a concept, in addition to understanding (the intellect) and action (the will), capable of including body and senses, desires and imagination. The point was not only to redeem the person from alienating and deterministic systems, but to let the truths of Christianity refract through the lens of problems turning on the meaning and significance of life.

---

<sup>41</sup> For a helpful summary of concerns and the Conciliar response, see Tracey Rowland, "The treatment of culture in *Gaudium et Spes*," in *Culture and the Thomist Tradition After Vatican II* (London: Routledge, 2003), 9-32. For a more ample philosophical treatment see Philippe Bordeyne, *L'homme et son angoisse: La théologie morale de 'Gaudium et spes'* (Paris: Les éditions Cerf, 2004).

*Loving Being in Giussani and Balthasar*

The basic metaphysical presupposition underlying Balthasar and Giussani's analysis of gazing, asceticism, and affection is reinforced by Transcendental Thomism. Both authors drew from this source to give the Christian fact real meaning in their own contexts. The multiple manifestations of Christ's abiding presence in ordinary life – friendship, community, social action, etc. – were evaluated in terms of their ability to manifest beauty. Giussani writes: "that which is true, beautiful, good, loving, [and] joyous renders itself present in [Christ's] human flesh. This flesh perdures [*prosegue*] through the ages (*AD*, 97)." With regards to God's self-revelation, to which Giussani gestures in retelling the narratives of John and Andrew, and of Zacchaeus, absolute Being makes its appearance known through the beautiful *via* ordinary encounters and events. Of course, once they are interpreted with the depth of the gaze, the ordinary becomes extraordinary. The beautiful is here taken to be a quality that provokes an innate reaction of awe and respect. The revelation of Christ across space and time is mediated by reality when it passes through a sensible object of apprehension as the beautiful.<sup>42</sup> It is the experience of a felt presence, which reaches the heart through the gaze, that brings the *sensatio* of divine beauty to the fore.<sup>43</sup> Through beauty, the act of faith is an embodied and embodying event. It depends on sense provocation, and thus embraces the emotions and affections – both of which are corporeal, not spiritual faculties.

As Giussani tried to exhibit by quoting the phrase *pulchrum splendor veritatis*, the deeply unified conception of man in Thomas was the authoritative basis for his own reflections on beauty.<sup>44</sup> When Giussani ventures to comment on the

---

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Matt. 18:20.

<sup>43</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I, 234.

<sup>44</sup> Beauty has the following anthropology behind it that makes it an important launching point for reflection on truth: "In accord with his deeply unified conception of man, Thomas is not content to treat the spiritual faculties – intelligence and will – and their acts – knowing and willing – which are specific to human beings. He also studies those acts that are common to men and animals, owing to their common corporeal nature and that, in man, are or at least ought to be integrated into the spirit's activities. Following an often-repeated parallel, just as our knowledge begins with sense perception, so too our first subjective reactions begin at the level of sensitive appetite (or affectivity), which is to say at the level of the natural tendency that inclines the living being toward its good (or what appears such)" (Jean-Pierre Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 2: *Spiritual Master*, translated by Robert Royal [Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003], 259. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* Ia q. 80-81; *De Veritate*, q. 25, a. 1).

Incarnation, he is expounding Thomas's definition of man – a thinking, acting, and feeling being – with particular emphasis on the emotions. The Incarnation, Giussani believes, reveals God's sympathy for the human predicament and, by the same token, challenges those body-soul dualisms that try to extricate the emotions from the body. Giussani looks at the Incarnation through the problem of body-soul dualism in two ways. For one, the act of faith is assent to the Word made flesh and to all that follows in decision and action from that singular event in history. But since the Incarnation does not mean that the act of faith should be defined only in terms of knowledge, understanding, and appropriation, a second way in which it is made meaningful in life is by reference to "flesh and bones." That the concept of the *saequela* should require a bodily experience – if not a tangible one, then one that is at least sensible, versus an intellectually assimilated fact – is deduced from the humanity of Christ (*AD*, 283).

The "presence" through which beauty passes, the Other, as it were, is the manifestation of an extraordinary Presence that invites recognition, appropriation, and exultation, Giussani says. Along the same lines, Aidan Nichols summarizes Balthasar on the metaphysics of beauty, indicating the areas of overlap with Thomas. Balthasar's fascination with beauty, it seems, lies in how the person can use the world's self-disclosure as the pathway to apprehending the divine *via* analogy.

[Balthasar's concept of beauty is] the beauty of finite dependent being as reflecting the glory of the infinite subsistent being from whom it receives everything it has. It is the Thomas who knew how infinitely the divine Essence transcends common being yet for whom that common being is no commonplace thing but something irradiated by glory. It is the Thomas who grasps, moreover, that revelation does not nullify a natural theology but raises and completes it as the glory of the Son elevates by his saving grace the beauty of the world.<sup>45</sup>

For Balthasar, as for Giussani, the relation of one being to another is intrinsically reciprocal. Being is made for self-giving and receiving. The perfection of our likeness in God's image is likewise achieved by an opening up of our being to other beings – to each other and to God. Union with God, then, is achieved through this

---

<sup>45</sup> Aidan Nichols, "Balthasar's Aims in the 'Theological Aesthetics,'" in *Glory, grace, and culture: the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, edited by Ed Block (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 120.



aperture. Love is demystified as an abstract concept through concrete acts of openness, and being becomes a gateway to the mystical life.<sup>46</sup> Mystical, here, does not refer to “extraordinary experiences of union with God.” Rather, it is the union with God “open to all men,” as Balthasar and Giussani see reflected in the theme of Johannine theology.<sup>47</sup> A radical openness to reality, they maintain, allows the person to sanctify time and space and to open himself more to God (*il tempio nel tempo* – God’s dwelling place in time).

The time has come to reread Giussani’s concept of *the gaze*, *asceticism*, and *the heart* in the light of Balthasar’s theological aesthetics.

### *Giussani in the Light of Balthasar’s Theological Aesthetics*

#### *The Gaze*

One aspect of beauty concerns deeply gazing at reality and asking that of which the object is a sign. To deprive oneself of the gaze’s penetrating depth (*la profondità di questo sguardo*) is to lose the wonderment that everything is an event, that is, we lose the sense of the richness of things. The aspect of seeking something other is an important facet of Giussani’s notion of the act of faith. Before getting to this point, I want to plumb the phenomenological experience of the gaze – that same gaze that is applied to John and Andrew (*AD*, 332), as well as to Zacchaeus (*TA*, 248, *OCC*, 54, *AD*, 210).

That face which emerges from the crowd and attracts you like a source of light (according to Tarkovskij’s page on Rublev), that face which differentiates itself from everything through its sudden luminosity and leaves its imprint in you to differentiate itself from everything – and the more you look at it, the more it differentiates itself from everything – that face is there for the sake of what it is prophesying, not for what it gives you (*AD*, 293).<sup>48</sup>

There are several points of similarity between Giussani’s description of “the gaze” and Balthasar’s *theological aesthetics*. For Balthasar, two features constitute

---

<sup>46</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I, 233.

<sup>47</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I, 233 and 236.

<sup>48</sup> In the footnote, Giussani cites the following passage: “You know what I’m talking about, some days nothing goes right, or otherwise you’re tired, exhausted, and nothing seems to give you reprieve. Then suddenly, amidst the crowd, you meet a simple gaze, a human gaze, and it is as if you were to have received communion, and then, suddenly, everything is much better.” (Tarkovskij, *Andrej Rublëv* [Milan: Garzanti, 1992], 74. (My translation.)

theological aesthetics: *vision* and *rapture*. In the “Introduction” to *The Glory of the Lord* (Vol. 1), Balthasar specifies: “...theological aesthetics must properly be developed in two phases, which are:

1. The theory of vision (or fundamental theology): ‘aesthetics’ in the Kantian sense as a theory about the perception of the form of God’s self-revelation.
2. The theory of rapture (or dogmatic theology): ‘aesthetics’ as a theory about the Incarnation of God’s glory and the consequent elevation of man to participate in that glory.”<sup>49</sup>

What we are dealing with in theological aesthetics (in this passage and scores like it) is, according to Aidan Nichols, “the study of how we come, enraptured, to see God, the world, and ourselves in relation to God and the world with new eyes, thanks to our perception of the form of God’s self-disclosure.”<sup>50</sup> The general sense of theological aesthetics leads us to take Balthasar’s term *vision* as the whole dynamic played out in the object’s appearance, which ultimately entails the coming to light of the object’s primeval Creator; and the term *rapture* as the form of the subject’s spontaneous act of freedom, which, in a finite sense, is to grasp what is good, and in an eschatological sense, to cooperate with Christ in his mission of salvation. The act of faith, i.e., the existential “yes” of the subject, it follows, occurs as an inspired and free movement toward what is apprehended, the beginnings of which are in the gaze.<sup>51</sup> In light of Balthasar’s two-fold distinction, and its impact on the act of faith, Giussani’s notion of the gaze can be reread in the following way:

The gaze is an instrument of perception that leads to a fuller knowledge of things and their meaning. As light cast on an object in obscurity, the gaze brings particularities into view. The coming into light of particularities enables individuals to distinguish parts within the single object itself and differentiate between objects. The gaze, moreover, is penetrating: it is able to go beyond surface appearance to excavate a more ample meaning from the depths.<sup>52</sup> Balthasar speaks, in this

---

<sup>49</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I, 125.

<sup>50</sup> Nichols, “Balthasar’s Aims in the ‘Theological Aesthetics,’” 115-116.

<sup>51</sup> Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 194.

<sup>52</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic 1: Truth of the World*, 159.

connection, of revelation from the created things – a notion which Giussani echoes in the collection of his talks on beauty entitled *Affezione e dimora*. As spelled out by Balthasar, the theological significance of the subject's reading God from within the world comes about as follows:

In order to read even a form within the world, we must see something invisible as well, and we do in fact see it. In a flower, a certain interior reality opens its eye and reveals something beyond and more profound than a form which delights us by its proportion and colour. In the rhythm of the form of plants – from seed to full growth, from bud to fruit – there is manifested an essence, and to reduce the laws of this essence to mere utilitarian principles would be blasphemous.<sup>53</sup>

From the depths, the significance of the part is disclosed in relation to the whole. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts and the parts cannot be maximally understood apart from the whole. To consider the “totality of factors” – to use Giussani's phrase – which is to consider the relation of the part to the whole, is also to grasp the essential meaning of things as created by an Other. And yet, Giussani cautions, whatever more of the surface we are able to see from the depths, the disclosure is not yet the disclosure of the beatific vision, and, therefore, it is not yet the fulfilment of perfect joy. What it intimates, instead, is the rational proposition, acquired from the gaze (*la razionalità dello sguardo*), that all being springs from a first mover, an uncaused cause (*siete razionali se affermate questo qualcosa d'altro* [AD, 358]). The Christian, in a second movement, might also intimate from the gaze something of the particularity of Christ. “We [in CL] say that Christ is a presence in the gaze. Whatever it is that we look at, Christ is in the gaze (AD, 326)” – an insight derived, according to Balthasar, from the fact that “[the Incarnation is] an event which in a supereminent sense may be called an ‘appearance’ or ‘epiphany.’”<sup>54</sup>

The gaze brings the subject into contact with an object that makes a claim on his will. One cannot be passive before an intimation of God's existence or the fact of Christ's abiding presence and still be fully authentic: “The gaze discloses a presence by which the heart is struck and called back to itself, by means of which everything is put into motion, cast into action, and penetrates the unknown [*sussulto e in azione*,

---

<sup>53</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I, 444.

<sup>54</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I, 119.

*e assalta l'ignoto*] (AD, 333).” Or as Balthasar says: “the truth is in motion, it presses upon the mind and calls the conscience to decision.”<sup>55</sup> And this occurs because “[...] the all-encompassing act [viz., the gaze] that contains within itself the hearing and the believing is a *perception* (*Wahrnehmung*), in the strong sense of a ‘taking to oneself’ (*nehmen*) of something true (*Wahres*) which is offering itself.”<sup>56</sup> The invitation to accept what is offered means, for Balthasar, that “the concept of will is an integral part of the concept of knowledge.”<sup>57</sup>

For Giussani, similarly, gazing involves both intellection and a decision to action. The freedom of the subject comes fully into play with decision. The subject can choose to reduce and restrain reality to its parts, ignoring the presentment of something calling from the depths. Such an attitude would be characteristic of ideology and preconception; as Balthasar puts it: “It is only when such progress rests on the presupposition that the mystery of Being may be fundamentally dissolved by progressive stages [...] that the blindness sets in which is no longer capable of seeing the objective phenomenon.”<sup>58</sup> But, to gaze is to do the opposite: it is to be *willing* to open oneself to “the totality of factors,” the *whole* in which all intellection on particulars takes place. There is no way of beholding the universe as beautiful, in the final analysis, without already having consented to seeking a provocation that is more than the surface appearance.

### *Asceticism*

In a host of discussions related to perceiving, desiring, grasping, possessing, and loving the beautiful, Giussani refers to *sacrifice* and *detachment*, which he specifies is directed to the subject’s perception of and participation in the Mystery, i.e., the Infinite. Asceticism helps the subject mature without having to transcend the corporeal world of real beings by recommending sacrifice as a means to achieving a greater goal. The terms *sacrifice* and *detachment*, nevertheless, are used in multiple ways. In each case, a parallel can be found in Balthasar’s conceptual development of asceticism.

---

<sup>55</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I: Truth of the World*, 145.

<sup>56</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I, 120.

<sup>57</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic I: Truth of the World*, 112.

<sup>58</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of The Lord*, vol. I, 446.

Sometimes Balthasar uses *sacrifice* and *detachment* interchangeably to mean the same thing: namely, the practice of taking distance from an object to judge its inherent goodness or to perceive the whole of which it is a part, and, in this manner, to ensure the object's spontaneous self-revelation. According to Balthasar's notion of the *Gestalt*, the objective of asceticism, such as Giussani intends, concerns the desire both to know the object and to see it properly in order that it may be known *as it is* rather than *as one would have it be*.<sup>59</sup> The kind of distance both authors recommend corrects a tendency (on the one hand) to over-determine an object, to the point of excluding mystery, and (on the other) to abstain from judgement entirely, to the point of relativising truth. Proximity and possession are exercised unproblematically, then, only when the object takes possession of the subject by its own self-revelation (echoing a theme in Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, and Karol Wojtyla, among others<sup>60</sup>). Giussani identifies the following features of detached attachment (*AD*, 68-70): (i) attachment establishes the ground for the simple recognition of beauty, which leads, through desire, to ultimate truth, i.e., God; (ii) if attachment does not stem from the recognition of a simple beauty, it is the sign of something one wants to have for oneself; (iii) once a true attachment has been formed it is a matter of course that everything else will be seen from within the framework of the I-Thou relation; (iv) in embracing the object of attachment, you embrace the whole world.

The more restrained definition of *sacrifice*, equally ascetical in practice, has an existential application. It recommends that the subject open himself to the possibility of being surprised by beauty when confronted by difficult circumstances, or daily hardships, or a general state of angst. Beauty apart from hardship is simply too aesthetic and sentimental to be the kind of beauty Giussani wishes to underscore (*AD*, 211). Along these lines, Giussani reminds his audience that all worthy projects come at a personal cost. The cost, which entails sacrifice, is ascetical in kind insofar as it demands self-denial for a greater goal (*AD*, 152). The existential significance of sacrifice should not be lost at the expense of the transcendent goal: Giussani does not merely recommend cultivating the habit of sacrifice to attain or secure a transcendent

---

<sup>59</sup> Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 219-220.

<sup>60</sup> See Robert Di Pede, "Luigi Giussani on the Notion of Christian Friendship," in *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 14.1 (2011): 91-121.

goal. Sacrifice, for him, is the transformation of daily hardship into an occasion for reading beauty out of any circumstance in order to make *this* life meaningful (*AD*, 157), and, thus, for perceiving God's mysterious design in the things that happen *in the present* (*AD*, 146 and 193).

Balthasar explores a similar line of thought, applying it to the full gamut of the *Gestalt*. At no point is beauty merely directed to sensuous pleasure. Sacrifice aims to integrate the irreconcilable aspects of existence into a harmonious whole, mysterious, but replete with eschatological significance.

This, the level of experience, is even in ordinary life the realm where all life's irreconcilable aspects become integrated. The recalcitrance and drudgery of everyday existence induce us to flee into a sphere of illusion where we think we are going to come face to face with the beautiful in distilled form. And yet we know that it is only the overcoming of workday rigours and perseverance in them that will hew out the precious stone which has to emerge from the rough block of existence. The really beautiful shines from the place where the real has itself acquired form, where the seductive opposition between illusion and disillusion has been transcended. The totality of existence remains a mystery, but one the form of whose appearance is not a strange enigma for the experienced person who has been tested by existence; for him it is a luminous space which he has embraced. By having experienced existence the person who has thus become wise now understands something of the mystery of Being.<sup>61</sup>

In short, for Balthasar, as for Giussani, beauty makes its surprising appearance when fatigue is overcome, disillusion is transcended, difficult circumstances are confronted, and dreaming is tempered by realism. For Giussani, this non-sentimental beauty is authenticated when, amidst the hurly-burly, the subject strives to use the faces of his/her fellows to see the face of Christ, i.e., to seek the traces of the humanizing presence of the Christian community "in everything that happens and in everyone that one meets (*AD*, 97)."<sup>62</sup>

---

<sup>61</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. I, 239.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. "When we ask our human preference to turn into the presence of Christ, we charge ourselves with the task of carrying within our breast the humanity of the [*Memores Domini*] house, and to find the vestiges of humanity in that house through everything that happens to us and in the persons we encounter there (*AD*, 97)."

*The Heart*

Just as truth is the object of the intellect, and the good the object of the will, so beauty is the object of the heart. For Giussani and Balthasar, introducing affectivity through beauty repairs the errant attempt to escape from the body; for whereas religious belief and practice could accentuate both knowing (intellect) and doing (will), so beauty accentuates loving (heart). Beauty, then, assigns special importance to the heart in deciding and acting, and carries special implications for the act of faith. The heart, moreover, is linked to the sense faculty of perception. The connection between seeing and feeling is described by Giussani as between the gaze and the heart: “in the journey to faith, the gaze uncovers a presence by which the heart is struck” (*AD*, 333). And yet, both Giussani and Balthasar are weary of confusing feeling with sentiment. Balthasar writes: “We are not referring primarily to a ‘feeling’ considered as a third act which is mostly below the level of spirit and distinct from the spiritual acts of the intellect and the will [...], but primarily to the heart of human wholeness, where all man’s faculties (*potentiae*) appear rooted in the unity of his *forma substantialis*, regardless of whether these faculties are of a spiritual, a sensitive, or a vegetative kind.”<sup>63</sup> The rationale, Balthasar explains, is thus: “What is termed ‘feeling,’ in contradistinction to intellect and will, lies neither ‘beside’ nor ‘beneath’ the spiritual faculties. This is evident already from the fact that animals are not men from whom intellect and will have been removed. [...] Otherwise, feeling and disposition would be primarily sub-human and we could no longer understand why Sacred Scripture characterizes the ‘heart’ and even the ‘bowels’ (from which is derived, ‘to have mercy’) as the seat both of man’s deepest personal reactions and God’s own most profound attitude with regard to the world.”<sup>64</sup> In this connection, Giussani, arguably more than Balthasar, presupposes an original intuition into reality on which subsequent truth claims are based.<sup>65</sup> Both authors

---

<sup>63</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 242-243.

<sup>64</sup> Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, I, 243-244.

<sup>65</sup> See my Chapter One, “Judgement,” where I have discussed how in its extreme form, Giussani’s doctrine of “correspondence” (with its emphasis on the heart’s capacity to judge the value of an object through an act of self-reflection, such that the object is compared to an innate sense of truth, goodness, justice, beauty, and so on) bears resemblance to the ontologism of Antonio Gioberti (1801-1852), Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855), and the Louvain school. Aware that his notion has been controversial in the Church’s intellectual history, Giussani seeks to gain some distance from them: “[The call to the

struggle differently, however, to define with precision the interior and exterior grounds of faith. And yet, both authors maintain the necessity of the heart in the act of judgement, while apprising also the importance of the intellect and the will.

*The usefulness of these categories to Giussani:*

The account of beauty, including the categories of *gazing*, *asceticism*, and *the heart*, which involves the transformation of the subject-object relation into the I-Thou relation, not to mention the intuitive perception of the ground of all being, explicitly engages a question about the act of faith. In the second chapter of *The Religious Sense*, Giussani states that his enquiry is motivated by the need to recover the “adequate reasons” for religious belief and practice (RS,12-22 ). When he goes on to expand his definition of reasonableness it becomes clear he is navigating a tension between acting for reasons (on the one hand) and trusting the authority of an other (on the other hand). The beauty of a presence captured through the gaze introduces a new feature into that act, namely appetite, rooted in the heart and expressed through affection and sympathy, which operates in conjunction with understanding and action. But the relation between heart, intellect, and will is a difficult one to navigate. How does Giussani understand the relationship between the faculty of the intellect and the faculty of the will, in the first place, that leads him, along with Balthasar, to posit the third affective faculty, the heart? The answer, I believe, can be excavated in one of Giussani’s sources, Pierre Rousselot, SJ (1846-1924), as indicated by two clues: Giussani’s use of the word “reasonable,” and a quotation in *At the Origins of the Christian Claim* from Rousselot’s *The Eyes of Faith*,<sup>66</sup> through which Giussani explains the significance of the Zacchaeus narrative: “What shook [Zacchaeus] and changed him? Quite simply, he had been penetrated

---

subject] is not made by God directly, as the so-called ‘ontologists’ maintain; as though the human spirit were able to intuit God, as the eye is able to see, however confusedly. The call that puts the religious sense of man into motion comes from God through created reality (SD, 19).” The latter doctrine, concerning sympathy for Divine things, as it were, is derived from Thomas Aquinas (cf. *Summa Theologiae* II-II, q. 45 a. 2), and differs from ontologism, as Giussani states. And yet, as I have discussed in Chapter One, Giussani does not always discuss with clarity the relation between intuition and connatural knowledge (on the one hand) and our dependence on language and Revelation (on the other).

<sup>66</sup> Pierre Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith*. Translated by Joseph Donceel (New York: Fordham University Press, 1990). Originally published as «Les Yeux de la foi,» in *Recherches de Science Religieuse* 1 (1910): 241-59 and 444-75.



and captured by a gaze that recognized and loved him for what he was. The ability to take hold of the heart of a man is the greatest, most persuasive miracle of all. [Quoting Rousselot]: ‘Jesus imposes himself upon the conscience. He is at home in the innermost self of others [...] He does not limit himself to declaring a doctrine that is his through knowledge, that he has learned through Revelation: his concern, it might be said, is a personal affair’ (*OCC*, 54).” Here, “personal affair” (*une affaire personnelle*) does not mean “private,” but rather the relation and relevance of faith to the personhood of the believer, encompassing intellect, will, and sensibility. This personal relation constitutes the dynamism of the act of faith, the stages of which are summarized by one author as follows: “First, the subject is inspired by and brought over to the object in beauty; then the subject, in full freedom, can reject or give assent (and in the rich dramatic sense of the good, he can strive, fail, sin, misjudge, surrender, suffer loss, and so forth); finally, then, as a result of the mutual acts of object and subject, truth is born.”<sup>67</sup> In the act of faith, therefore, the relation of the object to truth is more than the adequation of the thing to the intellect (*adequatio rei ad intellectum*), it is the subject’s *perceiving* and *giving assent* to the relation of a part to the whole.<sup>68</sup>

At the heart of the relation of part to whole is the notion that *perceiving* and *giving assent* are one and the same act: “*perceiving the connection* [between the parts and therefore seeing them as parts] and *giving one’s assent* are one and the same thing.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, Rousselot iterates, “[i]t is because man wills that he sees the truth. It is because man sees the truth that he wills.”<sup>70</sup> To frame the dynamic act of faith as such is, for him, to show necessarily that both statements simultaneously constitute the subject’s existential ‘yes’ – a ‘yes’ that is, paradoxically, a free affirmation of a proposition (on the one hand), while being an obedient submission to certitude (on the other). Lest the statements “to will in order to see the truth” and “to see the truth in order to will” should, in being conjoined in a simultaneous act, cancel each other out, Rousselot observes a further paradoxical act in which “each brings the other into

---

<sup>67</sup> Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 398.

<sup>68</sup> Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith*, 50-51. Cf. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 388.

<sup>69</sup> Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith*, 30.

<sup>70</sup> Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith*, 48.

reality as a condition of its own realization.”<sup>71</sup> That paradox is the simultaneity of love and knowledge: “Love arouses the faculty of knowing, and by the same stroke, knowledge justifies that love.”<sup>72</sup> At least two problems remain.<sup>73</sup> (1) In uniting intellect and will there is risk of collapsing the separation, distinction, and complex relation between them. (2) Knowledge that is pure love of being posits being as an appetitive good reducing the intellect to will. The subject’s striving for and going out toward the object eliminates receptivity from the movement. Thus the object has no opportunity to strike the subject. This logic reproduces itself in determinism, mechanism, and various types of ideology and preconception. Rousselot’s theory does not resolve this problem, but helpfully identifies the need of a *third* to mediate the relation of the intellect and the will in order that the two faculties remain separate, distinct, and in complex relation. That third is posited by Giussani and Balthasar as the faculty of the heart, the proper object of which, as we have seen above, is beauty.

### LEADING TENDENCIES

In his article “Drama and the Ends of Modernity,” Ben Quash traces the Hegelian lineaments in Balthasar’s *Theodramatics*.<sup>74</sup> Quash’s Hegel takes two competing approaches to reality: On the one hand, he observes Hegel’s project as a “quest for absolute knowledge;” on the other hand, he finds Hegel to be “a most nuanced student of embodied particulars.”<sup>75</sup> The tension between these two poles translates into the relation between universals and particulars. When applied to narrative styles and ways of looking at reality, Quash argues that the preference for universals and the tendency to seek absolute knowledge participates in the “epic” genre. The prototypical *dénouement* of epic literature ties loose ends into a harmonious whole; life’s tensions are resolved and ambiguity is clarified. Calmer

---

<sup>71</sup> Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith*, 48. Cf. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 392.

<sup>72</sup> Rousselot, *The Eyes of Faith*, 50. Cf. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 392.

<sup>73</sup> For the identification of these problems, I am indebted to Schindler’s discussion in *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 392-393.

<sup>74</sup> Ben Quash, “Drama and the Ends of Modernity,” in *Balthasar at the End of Modernity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999): 139-171.

<sup>75</sup> Ben Quash, “Drama and the Ends of Modernity,” 145.

waters and brighter weather, so to speak, leave the reader by the end with a sense of smooth sailing up ahead. Balthasar, overall, participates in the epic genre, according to Quash. Meanwhile, with the prototypical *dénouement* of lyric literature there remains, in the end, a residue of tension and uncertainty, which prevails over the protagonists' best efforts to resolve problems for all peoples, at all times, in all places. The gray scripted into a lyric conclusion invites the reader to read reality "from the middle," as it were, where certainty and uncertainty cohabitate, at times in tension, resulting in ambiguity, rather than absolute certainty. The reader closes the book asking how, given the particularity of the circumstances in which he finds himself (different from those in which other readers will find themselves), the good he wants to achieve may be achieved.

Quash extends his thesis on Balthasar to the whole of modernity, pointing to the intellectual quest for certainty. He cites a similar thesis argued by Stephen Toulmin in his survey of Western thought and culture.<sup>76</sup> The modern period, from the 17<sup>th</sup> century on, versus the Middle Ages and Renaissance, was characterized overall by the quest for absolute knowledge. Quash holds that the modern preference for harmonious resolutions, rather than untidy endings, resulted with a shift in the 17<sup>th</sup> century from practical knowledge to theoretical knowledge. Theoretical knowledge exhibits a preference for the written over the oral, the universal over the particular, the general over the local, the timeless over the timely.<sup>77</sup> These tendencies abide in Balthasar's notion of drama – reproduced, that is, unwittingly and not without a sustained attempt, through many theological tomes, to attend, in the lyric mode, to the practical concerns of his audience. Consider, for instance, his sustained polemic against the Kantian-styled schematism of "sawdust Thomism" as an attempt to recover the relevant (read: practical) aspects of theology.

The epic tendencies exhibited in Giussani's account of beauty have particular manifestations. The following already stand out on a superficial reading: a) the author's recommendation to follow the universal methodology expounded in *The Religious Sense*; b) the habit of universalizing particular problems and resolving them with general answers; c) the preference for tidy endings rather than "reading

---

<sup>76</sup> Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), especially 30-35.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 30-35.

from the middle.” I should like, in this section, to focus primarily on the second and third of these so-called Hegelian manifestations.<sup>78</sup> The following analysis is divided into two sections. *First*, I consider the role and importance of “the Mystery,” in Giussani’s account of beauty, both in terms of its deployment as a proper noun and a common noun, viz., in either case, by highlighting its causal role in resolving life’s provisionally ill-fated, incomprehensible, and irreconcilable conflicts harmoniously. *Second*, I consider Giussani’s notion of sacrifice with respect to the attainment of harmonious resolutions. We will see that the account of Christian hope, which applies to the first, and asceticism, which applies to the second, are unconventional. While Giussani latches on to certain patristic understandings of hope and ascesis, eclectically, to buttress his own account of drama *qua* beauty, he is actually more in line with Balthasar’s production of epic theology, which sees (from a God’s-eye view) the unfolding drama in human history, and in the lives of individual actors, harmoniously reconciled and perfectly consolidated here and now. By this means, Giussani leads his readers to a comfortable and familiar “inner space” of tidy and resolute endings.<sup>79</sup>

Giussani’s tidy resolutions play out before the backdrop of the overarching Mystery. The term Mystery is used in many different ways. According to one sense, Mystery refers to God. It is an apt term for God, for Giussani, insofar as God, who is infinite, can never be known exhaustively by rational beings, limited as they are in their apprehension of infinity. There is, however, a great deal already known about God, which He Himself has revealed to us about Himself, insofar as the Scriptures record and as reason has helped us to understand. When Giussani calls God “the Mystery” he is referring, in one sense, to the inexhaustible mystery, the “essence,” in Thomistic terminology, which is God’s being. In another sense, he is referring to God as the author of everything that is known and knowable about creation, as well as to God’s authorship of everything that is unknown and unknowable. The unknown and unknowable, however, are not synonymous with uncertainty, for Giussani. Rather, “the Mystery,” in another important sense, implies God’s design, the destiny of the world, of every individual being in the world, and of the

---

<sup>78</sup> I have considered Giussani’s epistemology in *Chapter One: Judgement*.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Quash, “Drama and the Ends of Modernity,” 141.

purposefulness of everything that happens. In cosmology, soteriology, and ethics, Giussani shows how “the Mystery” delivers the possibility of beauty, which cannot but lead the person who takes life’s meaning and purpose seriously to absolute knowledge about himself and the human conditions of loss, tragedy, and sadness. An analysis of Giussani’s cosmology, soteriology, and ethics ought, therefore, to demonstrate the tendency to treat beauty not only as a transcendental in the traditional Thomist sense, but as an ending in the Hegelian sense.

### *Cosmological application*

Mystery, for Giussani, does not necessarily compete with epistemological methods that seek to anchor knowledge in actual experience. The rationalist quest for certainty is a goal worth pursuing, he confirms, as long as the method used is adequate to the object of investigation (*RS*, 3). Giussani suggests that there are several kinds of certainty. His interest lies in questions that pertain to “moral certainty,” and not mathematical certainty or the supposedly harder proofs of science (*RS*, 21-22). In seeking moral certainty, it is not always inappropriate – and may indeed be most appropriate – to view the problem or object that provokes the subject’s response from one’s original posture of awe before the created universe (*RS*, 100-103). In a second movement, Giussani suggests, the subject may reflect first on the moral certainty yielded through awe as it relates to the object’s primeval origins, and second on its significance for a particular individual with regards to his particular destiny (*AD*, 308-309). Giussani’s notion of “moral certainty,” in summary, is directed first to knowing God through his effects (“*provocazioni*”), and second to knowing the significance of those effects personally. St. Thomas Aquinas expounds a similar doctrine concerning effective causality with greater nuance than Giussani in *De Trinitate* 1257-1258/59.<sup>80</sup> He also advances it as the third argument – from contingency – for God’s existence in the *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 2, a. 3. Given that effects are related to their cause, which may not be immediately apparent, Giussani recommends the gaze (*la tenerezza dello sguardo*) as a way of reading God

---

<sup>80</sup> For a thorough commentary on reasoning from effect to cause in *De Trinitate* 1257-1258/59, see John F. Wipple, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 508-510.

out of creation, or of perceiving the eternal significance of events in space and time as effects are related to their cause (referring, ultimately, to the First Cause).

The created universe, in this regard, may be looked upon superficially as an appearance, or, profoundly, as a sign. When it is looked upon as a sign, it is treated as an effect, the cause of which is to be determined by further enquiry. In enquiring from effect to cause, God comes more clearly into view, from beyond the appearance, as the “adequate” or “reasonable” hypothesis to the ultimate question of the first cause (*RS*, 19-20; 133-134). Now the prime mover, the uncreated cause, remains “faceless,” an “unknown presence,” the “Mystery,” according to Giussani, until religious tradition teaches us to know that it is God (*RS*, 106). And yet, in advance of tradition, “to be conscious of oneself right to the core is to perceive, at the depths of the self, an Other,” which leads to the awareness: “I am you who make me” (*RS*, 106). Similarly, when we consider the *feeling* of human dissatisfaction as an effect of longing for a greater fulfilment for which the human heart gropes, we come to realize that “[a]ll of the movement of humanity, all of the endeavour of this ‘laborious force which wearies us by keeping motion,’ is the [quest for the] knowledge of God (*RS*, 28-29, 133).”

There is, of course, an important difference to mark between (on the one hand) positing an inner knowledge of God’s existence that merely awaits external confirmation, as Giussani seems at times to do, and (on the other hand) enquiring into the causes of things and human longing as a consequence of God’s existence, as Thomas Aquinas does, by presupposing God’s existence on the authority of Scripture. Giussani does not actually begin with the same kind of Thomistic presupposition, but rather with the “hypothesis” of the Christian claim, which is tested through experience. But to recognize Giussani’s Other in our depths as the cause of which our very self and our every longing is the effect is already to operate on the basis of having already learned something quite particular about ourselves and the God-man relation. As Scripture teaches, “I will give them a heart to know that I am the LORD; and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.”<sup>81</sup> Put differently, it is because God has revealed

---

<sup>81</sup> *Jer.* 24: 7.

to us that our hearts are made to know him that we may think and speak of ourselves as attending His discovery for our fulfilment.

### *Soteriological application*

For Giussani, drawing eternal significance out of time and space, however inopportune, is a primary operation of the gaze (*AD*, 314). Eternal significance, it turns out, involves the reconciliation of binaries into a harmonious whole. It is with regards to the subject's perceiving eternal significance or attending harmonious reconciliations that two senses of mystery are invoked. First, mystery refers most simply to the unintelligibles of a situation as they relate to God's providence, foreknowledge, and divine assistance: e.g., what path reconciliation will take and how it will look when it is accomplished, not to mention, how, at the present time and place, it informs individuals with redemptive insight (*AD*, 308-309). Second, mystery refers to God's mysterious, but real, presence in all circumstances, and the adequation of the circumstances, through mysterious but real signs, to the subject's intellectual grasping of his Presence (cf. *AD*, 309). Both senses of mystery presuppose an account of *operative* and *cooperative grace*. Giussani never speaks in these terms. Instead he borrows a phrase from T. S. Eliot's (1888-1965) *Choruses from the Rock*, with additional references to Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Hans Urs von Balthasar, to highlight the significance of action (viz., Christian action) in space and time.<sup>82</sup> The tenor of these passages indicates Giussani's attempt to inspire his audience to become "protagonists" for the building of God's kingdom (*il tempio...*) on earth (*...nel tempo*) (*AD*, 311, 181, 314).<sup>83</sup> He seems, to that end, to

---

<sup>82</sup> It is worth recalling, at this point, that *Communion and Liberation* grew out of and in reaction to the need for a renewed protagonism (a veering away from moralism and sentimentality) in the Italian branch of *Catholic Action*. Reflecting on the origins of *CL*, Giussani made the following observations about *Catholic Action*: "For the young people involved in Catholic Action, living in the world meant having to be first, the best. The method of apostolic action was personal, individualistic, the whole purpose of which was entirely tied to the abilities and formation of the singular. The call was imposed according to a method that we might describe today as 'moralistic and sentimental.' Given the heart of this sad observation on the situation and the judgement it implied about the inadequacy of the method and the inauthenticity of the presence, there arose the fundamental intuition that Christ is the explicit criterion of the real, the centre of one's whole experience of culture." (Quoted in Massimo Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione: Le Origini 1954-1968*, 96-97).

<sup>83</sup> Giussani quotes "Chorus VII" from *Cori da "La Rocca"* (Milan: BUR, 1994): «*Ci fu un momento del tempo [...] che del tempo diede il significato*» [i.e., "a moment in time [...] and that moment of time gave the meaning"] (*AD*, 314). The full stanza written by Eliot reads stylistically like the opening verses of John's Gospel: "Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time / and of

adopt Heidegger's (1889-1976) terminology (acquired through the influence of Hannah Arendt), not only in order to speak of space and time, but to refer to the world as a "dwelling" (*dimora*), by which he designates the significance of that which is "ready-to-hand," viz., over and against a certain kind of philosophical proclivity to theorize and render abstract that which is at once concrete. In theological terms, Heidegger's terminology amounts to the building of God's kingdom with "bricks and mortar," so to speak; viz., the ascetical sublimation of human energy under the preponderance of the procreative aim to achieve a transcendent end – which is to act in ways other than to construct what is "dreamt of in philosophy."<sup>84</sup>

The theology that underlies Giussani's theory of protagonism, however, is far more indebted to St. Augustine's *City of God* and St. Thomas Aquinas's account of grace than to any of these modern authors. Apart from the paradigm of two cities – an earthly city and a heavenly one – Giussani's promotion of God's kingdom on earth, a mere shadow of the kingdom which is to come, presupposes God's salvific plan for creation from eternity. Concretely, the sanctification of the world relies both on God's ability to move minds and hearts in conformity with his plan (*operative grace*),<sup>85</sup> and the soul's free will to perform meritorious deeds in conformity with God's plan (*cooperative grace*).<sup>86</sup> While Giussani does not speak in these terms, there is enough evidence to suggest the function of *operative* and *cooperative grace* as underlying principles in his texts. I will return to this point below.

When it comes to describing the connection between the gaze and protagonism, it is the subject's freedom and the subject's nature and teleological

---

time, / A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history: / transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time / but not like a moment of time, / A moment in time but time was made through that moment: / for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment / of time gave the meaning" ("Choruses from 'The Rock'— 1932, Chorus VII," in *T.S. Eliot: The Collected Poems: 1909-1962* [New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1963, 1991], 163).

<sup>84</sup> To this end, Giussani quotes Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 1, sc. 5, lines 166-167: "'There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy' (*RS*, 51)."

<sup>85</sup> "Since the operating of some effect is not attributed to the moveable thing but to the (actively) moving thing, so too with the effect, in which our mind is moved but not (actively) moving, is God alone the mover; the operation is attributed to God: and accordingly it is called *operative grace*." "[...] insofar as [grace] heals the soul or justifies it or makes it pleasing to God, it is called *operative grace* [...]" (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 1.111, a. 2 c).

<sup>86</sup> "In that effect in which our mind is both moved and is (actively) moving, the operation is attributed not to God alone but also to the soul: this is accordingly called *cooperative grace*." "[...] insofar as [grace] is the principle of a meritorious deed, which proceeds from free will too, it is called *cooperative grace*" (*Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 1.111, a. 2 c).



relationship with God that comes dramatically into play. For Giussani, as for Thomas, everything that is (*quod est*) has significance and there is no such thing as chance.<sup>87</sup> For this reason, the subject is always charged with the responsibility of judging the object of apprehension by probing its contingency (i.e., to treat it as meaningful is to see it as the effect of a cause, or as the part of a whole). For Giussani, God is not a disinterested governor and judge of the world, but a presence at the intersection of space and time (*AD*, 309). Thomas makes several affirmations concerning God's "providential presence" – if I may provisionally put it that way – which are implied when Giussani speaks of the Mystery's continual becoming in this world.<sup>88</sup> Just as the term "presence" implies something able to be encountered, so "positivity" refers to the notional relation between being and the Source of all being. Both with respect to "positivity" and "encounter" the most important human dynamic is freedom: the freedom human beings have to accept or reject the truth that emerges from the encounter.

So as to provide a method by which to interpret the meaning and significance of events from the faith-perspective (i.e., "gazing at reality with the eyes of faith"), Giussani allows himself to be guided by the hope of God's salvific plan and the operation of grace in history. He recommends certain practices, such as ascetical detachment, in order that God's salvific plan and the operations of grace might be perceived through or read out of particular circumstances. For Giussani, the intrinsic nature of being and the operation of grace on free will provide important foundations for the proper understanding of how human beings relate to reality, the proper mode of which is openness, as characterized by affection (i.e., *affezione e dimora*). The proper object of affection, beauty, has to be determined in relation to the proper object of the intellect, truth, and the proper object of the will, goodness. Without an account of being and free will, the account of beauty, viz., the affective component of the philosophical approach to God, cannot lead to the kind of protagonism displayed in the *Acts of the Apostles*, which being neither intellectualistic nor moralistic is the very protagonism Giussani recommends universally. It is here that

---

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *In VI Libros Metaphysicorum*, lect. 3; *In I Peri herm.*, lect. 14, §§190-91; *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 116, a. 1. 1.

<sup>88</sup> The theme of "becoming a presence" – Giussani's phrase – relies on John 1: 14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."

presuppositions about God's foreknowledge and divine providence – however unsystematic and fleeting in Giussani's texts – become immensely important to evaluating the significance attached to extracting meaning for the "I" from the world.

Below, I will organize a network of ideas from Giussani's text related to grace and free will under the heading *Gestalt*. The ensemble of these ideas does not pose any grave problems when cited abstractly. It is their application to a deeper and more disconcerting set of particular questions, e.g., concerning untidy endings in human history, that raises the contentious issue of whether it is possible to read God out of all the effects of human agency insofar as all effects are connected to the first cause according to the principle of efficient causality. Does a defective effect born of a deficient humanly cause merely appear to be bad, or is it actually bad and so unwilled by God? How much does God actually will to happen in history that would require us to say not only that they were willed by God but intended specifically to be the fodder of contemplation for our sanctification? These are ponderous questions. Giussani confronts them unsystematically as he attempts to furnish his audience with practical theories to live by. Here, Giussani's readers are faced with the vaguenesses that result from conflating practical theories to live by (marked by attentiveness to particulars) with impersonal accounts (marked by a preference for the whole). His preference, in the end, is for the impersonal account, i.e., typified by the *epic* tenor of his authorship and his diminishing of the *lyric* – a tendency which unwittingly mitigates the pragmatic purport of his writings.

Before examining the latter, I should like to rehearse Giussani's framing of *Gestalt* according to its plain sense meaning. I am not going to analyse the concept yet, but organize materials scattered across Giussani's text to obtain as complete an account as possible with which to conduct the analysis of tendencies that will follow.

The discussion that follows organizes Giussani's work according to Balthasar's use of the term *Gestalt*. As I will show, the term *Gestalt* denotes: (a) the whole that is made up of the sum of its parts; (b) the act of grasping the universal essence from a particular manifestation; and (c) that the positivity of being, always

brimming over with perceptible significance and unintelligible mystery, is significant vis-à-vis ultimate questions and the God-man relation.<sup>89</sup>

- a) Giussani introduces the notional relation between “whole” and “part” in his idea of grasping the “religious phenomenon” from the “totality of factors.” The “religious fact” is not only a datum of language (the markings on a page of Scripture), but many data of the natural world that encompass and exceed the cosmos while fitting into God’s divine plan.

There is an “order” that ensures the “harmony” of the parts and of the parts to the whole, which Thomists call the “order of being.” “Harmony” (*l’armonia generale*), in Giussani’s vocabulary, denotes an intrinsic moral order – also applicable in evaluating affective ties, such a friendship (*AD*, 149 and 154) – in which i) the part ought never to replace the whole (e.g., one ought never to love some creature more than God), and ii) the whole ought never to replace the identity of its parts (e.g., an individual’s intellectual autonomy ought never to be sacrificed to general opinion). Giussani bases these rules on two ontological axioms of Thomas Aquinas, summarized as follows: “The first principle of being itself determines that everything is oriented as part of a whole toward the good of its own being and toward the good of the whole.” “The first principle and final end of all tending to be what one is in relation to the other is God, often characterized as Love.”<sup>90</sup>

- b) Since being is always positive, anything that is encountered, everything that is, even the *apparently* negative, has only to be seen properly (with the gaze) in order for its significance vis-à-vis the meaning and purpose of life to be understood and utilized. The meaning of “everything that happens” (*tutto che ti accade*) is at once mystery and resolution: the relation of the part to the whole is as the relation between individual events and God’s divine plan conceived from all eternity (*AD*, 150). The whole or totality falls under Giussani’s two uses of the term “mystery”: viz., 1) grace as the

<sup>89</sup> For the connection between truth and beauty in Balthasar, see *Theo Logic 1: Truth of the World*, 141-142. For the connection with mystery see *Theo-Logic 1: Truth of the World*, 206-26.

<sup>90</sup> Diana Fritz Cates, *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 106-108.

cause of good will (Divine Mystery)<sup>91</sup> and 2) the primacy and autonomy of divine favour over human will (The Mystery) (*AD*, 150).<sup>92</sup> Every created “factor,” which belongs to the whole, and gestures at its objective reality, is intrinsically good, as God affirms in Genesis 1:1-11, or “positive,” as Giussani affirms in the vocabulary of Thomist ontology (*AD*, 181). The *Gestalt* is always operating as the whole in which discrete parts and their particularities belong to the whole, i.e., God’s divine plan. To understand *Gestalt* by incorporating mystery gives ontology a practical role in living ethically. The whole makes sense of problems that arise in the parts, such as sin and division, resolving moments of uncertainty, void, and untidiness in the lives of individuals. The *Gestalt* situates “everything that happens” in God’s providential design, in order that “the agonies of the void might be quelled.”<sup>93</sup>

The gaze, which looks deeply (*lo sguardo profondo*) into the world, operates by breaking through (*sfonda*) the surface appearance not only to see the awesomeness of the parts in relation to the whole, but to penetrate the many layers of hidden meaning beneath the surface. The point of gazing is to arrive at the overarching mystery of the cosmos, the Source and Ground of being itself. Just as a deceptive encrustation blocks the radiation of truth from the centre, so the gaze breaks through to the underlying significance. To be struck by what radiates from the centre is in some way to be affected personally, transformed, and reoriented, as John and Andrew

---

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, c. 20, §43, *Patrologia Latina* (PL) 44, 906: “divine scripture, if it is carefully studied, shows that not only the good wills of men, which he made out of bad wills, and having made them good directs them to good works and to eternal life, but also those wills which maintain the creature of the world are so subject to the power of God that he makes them incline where he wills, when he wills, either to granting benefits to some, or to inflicting punishments on some, as he himself judges by a judgement most hidden indeed but without doubt most just” (quoted in Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 199).

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Augustine, *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, c. 22, § 41, PL 44, 906-911, where Augustine comments on *Romans* 11: 33: “O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgements and how inscrutable his ways!” Augustine argues that injustice must not be attributed to God if He hardened Pharaoh’s heart, for Pharaoh is neither excluded nor prevented from hardening his own heart by his own free will: “Deus induravit per iustum iudicium, et ipse Pharaon per liberum arbitrium” (quoted in Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 199-200).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Catherine Pickstock, “Necrophilia: The Middle of Modernity, A Study of Death, Signs, and The Eucharist,” in *Modern Theology* 12:4 (October, 1996): 405-433; here 405.

were directed onto a new path through their meeting with Jesus. The gaze is the instrument through which the person comes through moments of ambiguity and darkness to a bedrock of clarity, resolution, and certainty *in the present*. That courage which undergirds the journey from darkness to light, from experience to truth, is the mark of a “mature” or “serious” person, Giussani maintains. Since beauty is the affective dimension of that bedrock’s phenomenology, we may say with Giussani, for brevity’s sake, that the object of the gaze, like the heart, is *beauty-in-the-present*. This conception of beauty announces the primordial *Gestalt* (*l’armonia generale*), which is the form that anticipates the synthesis of the parts, even before the encounter occurs, leaving the subject in a state of eschatological anticipation (*AD*, 150). Since reaching the bedrock of certainty is an ideal of human existence *in the present*, the perception of beauty is the only appropriate means to “serious living,” the attempt to take ultimate questions seriously.

- c) Giussani maintains that since the relationship between the parts themselves and the notional relation between part and whole is itself a “mystery,” concealed in God’s divine intellect and unable to be determined by social science, moral agency, in response to the desire for beauty, demands a certain ascetical distance from the object to ensure both the object’s spontaneous self-revelation and to determine the subject’s proper grasp of it in relation to the whole (*AD*, 84). Any manner of relating to the object, other than to regard it as both significant and mysterious, which is to attend its self-revelation from a respectful distance, involves the imposition of a preconception, resulting in oppression (*AD*, 350). The subject’s openness, therefore, is foreclosed; his perception of reality is distorted; the nature of his affection is misconstrued; ultimately, the object itself is violated by being objectified.

When the subject’s approach to an object respects the “distance” required of the “order,” the presence that is encountered radiates a “positivity” from its centre that is proper to being and its harmony with the whole, constituting the primal phenomenon of *Gestalt*. The point at which

the object is met is the point at which the object is seen as a positive presence and becomes addressable as a “Thou” (*AD*, 91). This moment is constitutive of an “event,” for Giussani, the concrete character of which exhibits charity. John and Andrew’s encounter with Jesus, Giussani explains, provokes the subject because of its positive content (cf. *AD*, 166). As that content is processed by the intellect and, above all, by the heart (the use of the singular gestures at the intrinsic likeness of minds and hearts presupposed by Giussani), their gaze is redirected, their eyes become fixed anew on a focal point more adequate to their “I” and to the “I” of others. If they consent to the effects of the experience, they will find themselves oriented toward God, according to the literal sense of the word conversion (*con-vertere*).

### *Analysis*

While the immanent role and function of *Gestalt* in the life of the individual person is not yet a fully developed theory of God’s providential design in history, there are sufficient indications in Giussani’s text to suggest the operation of categories pertaining to history, such as God’s will, human freedom, and sin. Any account of these categories would, of course, bear crucially on the perspective Giussani takes with regards to time. Giussani, however, does not develop an account of time, except to recommend hope as an attitudinal disposition with which to attend clarity, resolution, and certainty, which is what he means by invoking the idea of *il tempio nel tempo*, or by quoting Bergson’s idea of duration (*durata*), the extension of the present moment in space (*AD*, 314), or by invoking Balthasar’s idea of drama (*AD*, 181), the delivery of a future security against the present void that arises from existential angst.<sup>94</sup>

There are two competing tendencies operating in Giussani’s notion of *Gestalt*: to attend (on the one hand) to the present in its particularity, and to look (on the other hand) to the future as a redeemed whole. The struggle between them exhibits itself in two ways: 1) Since the consummation ultimately anticipates the mysterious resolution of the void into a harmonious whole, the extension of the present moment

---

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Pickstock, “Necrophilia,” 405.

into the future is marked by the eschatological apprehension of *already and not yet*.

2) Insofar as Giussani follows Balthasar's lead in resolving harmoniously the traumatic questions of life's meaning and significance, both authors continue the programme of Quash's Hegel; viz., of modernity's quest for absolute knowledge and also, ironically, of its nuanced study of embodied particulars, and the dramatic interchange of human beings in their shared existence.<sup>95</sup> Particulars, in this modern/Hegelian programme, are not the proper object of Giussani's gaze. The whole that is greater than the sum of its parts is its proper object. The activity of the judgement, the evaluation of the "totality of factors" (to use Giussani's terminology), refers all particulars to the overarching system, i.e., God's salvific plan, "the mystery." Giussani speaks of the "totality of factors" as an interpretive tool by which to know and understand the particulars according to their participation in the overarching whole. And the whole refers to the epic resolution of unresolved tensions attended patiently, not only in the general (epic), but in the particular (lyric), i.e., both in respect of the person's final end, God, and of the satisfaction of her particular desires as they relate to God's ends. The logic of *Gestalt*, thus, implies slightly more than Giussani lets on, perhaps more than that of which he is even aware in terms of its philosophical sources. This will need a little more spelling out, particularly as certain traditional axioms of Catholic theology are disentangled from the author's modern expectations. Following Ben Quash, I take modern expectations here to derive from Hegel's legacy to theology. The concluding discussion on soteriology is divided into two parts: *Thomist Axioms* and *Hegelian Resolutions*.

### *Thomist Axioms*

Written into Giussani's account of *Gestalt* are traditional theological presuppositions concerning the relationship between God and man, such as grace, predestination, sin and redemption. Giussani does not develop these philosophico-theological approaches into an explicit system, but frequently relies on certain aspects of them to answer questions that arise in daily life from the faith-perspective. I have reconstructed and logically organized them according to Lonergan's account of the operation of grace in St. Thomas Aquinas, which I used as a diagnostic

---

<sup>95</sup> Quash, "Drama and the Ends of Modernity," 145.

checklist.<sup>96</sup> The following are the canons in Thomas's account of the relationship between God and man, which are central to Giussani's account of the unfolding of history and the anticipation of harmonious resolutions called "mystery" (cf. *AD*, 151).

- i) God necessarily controls all created activity.<sup>97</sup>
- ii) This control is exercised by the designs of Divine Providence...<sup>98</sup>
- iii) ... and is immanent in the dynamic cosmos as a fate.<sup>99</sup>
- iv) The operation of the creature is "in virtue of the operation of the creator as the art of a craftsman in his tools."<sup>100</sup>
- v) We know God's work is salvific and that the movements of creatures are all directed in love to this one end by a divine decree.<sup>101</sup>
- vi) And yet, a pure passivity cannot be free.
- vii) Rational beings are free insofar as they are masters and makers of their own judgement. They are potential co-creators with God when their wills conform to God's divine will; meanwhile, as voluntary agents, they are free to withdraw from the divine intellect by pursuing their own ends rather than God's. This is the category of sin for which the sinner is responsible.<sup>102</sup>

At this point, the discussion in Lonergan's text breaks off into a presentation of Thomas's doctrine of grace and the controversy concerning grace and freedom, which Giussani does not consider at all: viz., if voluntary agents, endowed with the ability to discern and judge rightly, are able to act accordingly, what need is there of grace?<sup>103</sup> Or if we suppose that the conditions of original sin make it exceedingly difficult to act rightly without grace, then what limitations does the operation of grace on the will impose on human freedom?<sup>104</sup> What Giussani does engage, as

---

<sup>96</sup>Cf. Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas* in *Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Vol. 1*, eds. Frederick E. Crowe and Robert M. Doran (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 314.

<sup>97</sup> *Summa contra Gentiles*, 3, c. 94; *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 103, a. 7.

<sup>98</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 109, a. 1.

<sup>99</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 116, aa. 2-3.

<sup>100</sup> *De potentia*, q. 3, a. 7, ad 7m.

<sup>101</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 109, a. 3.

<sup>102</sup> *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 79, a. 1, ad. 3 m; a.

<sup>103</sup> Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 349.

<sup>104</sup> Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 350.



already implied in the presuppositions above, pertains to the God-man relationship in the broadest sense. Relying on the human capacity both to understand through the senses and to reflect self-reflexively on his own experience, the concept of fate (*destino*) is developed alongside Giussani's epistemology of the heart.

Fate, here, follows the Thomist configuration "*virtus artis divinae in universo instrumentali*."<sup>105</sup> Three distinct categories are presupposed within that formula, directly bearing on Giussani's understanding of the historical process, insofar as he presupposes one to exist:

1. What God wills to take place.
2. What God wills not to take place.
3. What God permits to take place.

These correspond to:

1. What God effects ("objectively positive truth").
2. What God does not effect ("negative truth").
3. What God neither effects nor does not effect ("objective falsity").

The first two categories fall under God's providential plan of salvation. The third raises the problem of sin *en face* of that plan and introduces the concept of responsibility. Giussani develops the third category, "objective falsity," under the rubric *negatività*. Objective falsity is negative in three ways, according to Giussani: "*menzogna*" – the absence of truth in some proposition or action (*AD*, 66); "*negatività*" proper – nonconformity of human action with the divine intellect, or, conversely, non-participation of divine intelligibility with human action (*AD*, 166); and "*resistenza*" – the negation of an object of intelligence and understanding (*AD*, 66). Giussani's predominant tendency is to expound the first two categories, and to limit the third simply to the acknowledgement of sin. The third category raises important questions, however, concerning God's plan in relation to sin and the shadow of sin, uncertainty, and untidy endings.

### *Hegelian Resolutions*

Giussani's focus on 1 and 2 inclines him to say that there is nothing that happens that is without purpose (*AD*, 234). While he does not formally allow sin to

---

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 338.

be regarded positively, such as he allows of real existents, he suggests practically that an attempt be undertaken to extract meaning and purpose from sin which, once uncovered, ought to be referred to clarifying the purpose of life, as Augustine's sin reminds him of his infinite longing for God.<sup>106</sup> The third category, then, reverts to the content of the first and second, without bringing the concept of responsibility to full development. Following Quash, I should like to show that the reversion to 1 and 2 follows a tendency – derived from Hegel, not Augustine – to elide impersonal account and practical-theory-to-live-by. What I label impersonal account corresponds to Quash's epic genre, and what I label practical-theory-to-live-by corresponds to his lyric genre. The basic differences may be delineated as follows, with help from Stephen Toulmin, whose categories Quash imports into his article on Balthasar. While the former values the soundness and validity of arguments based on the logic of internal relations, the latter references arguments to the questions they were crafted to answer. While the former is concerned with comprehensive moral theory, the latter always respects detailed circumstances of specific kinds of a case. While the former generalizes the cases of its application, the latter retains their concrete diversity. While the former delivers solutions that hold good for all times, the latter considers what might be appropriate for the moment at hand.<sup>107</sup>

The elision Giussani effects, similar to Balthasar's, is not perfectly balanced between epic and lyric, but inclines toward the epic, aligning him more with Hegel than with Augustine, according to Quash's diagnostic. Its effects are manifested in the following ways: Giussani acknowledges the untidiness of spiritual and psychological infirmity, and roots the tendency to act sinfully in a fallen human nature, but fails to account for sins' effects on the individual and, especially, society, even after contrition, absolution, and expiation. Contrastingly, Dante (c.1265-1321), in line with other medieval thinkers, dealt with the effects of sin, highlighting their destructive impact on the body politic, through his relegation of traitors (e.g., of family, friends, homeland, political party, guests, and benefactors) to the lowest rung

---

<sup>106</sup> Cf. "For within me was a famine of that inward food, Thyself, my God; yet, through that famine I was not hungered; but was without all longing for incorruptible sustenance, not because filled therewith, but the more empty, the more I loathed it. For this cause my soul was sickly and full of sores, it miserably cast itself forth, desiring to be scraped by the touch of objects of sense" (Augustine, *Confessions*, Book III, translated by Edward Pusey [London: J.M. Dent; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1907], 22).

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis*, 30-35.

of Hell.<sup>108</sup> Giussani is reluctant to demure on the sometimes irreparable repercussions of sin (in this life) for which the sinner is responsible. The attempt to evade this untidiness is compounded by the ontological emphasis on “positivity” (*positività*) through which the category of beauty is expounded in the order of the transcendentals: to stress that human beings are masters and makers of their own judgement; to exhibit the epistemological functions of the heart in relation to the phenomena of the world; to specify action as participation in the divine plan; to exhibit God’s providential plan in the particular destiny of each person; to anticipate, mystically, that everything that gives itself is gift to be encountered and that all objects point to the overarching (Divine) whole.<sup>109</sup>

It is, of course, doctrinally sound to include 1 and 2 in any account that takes God’s creative power seriously, such as Thomas does. Moreover, it is strategically interesting to expound the act of faith as an encounter that is willed by the maker of the universe as part of a beautiful design, a gift, universally and individually significant, to which one has only to consent in order to participate. It is quite another matter to apply 1 and 2 to practical problems that arise, such as Giussani also tends to do. I shall return below to observing the effect of this tendency. Since the tendency to apply 1 and 2 to problems that arise requires emptying them of their particularity, in order that they may be transformed into universal types amenable to general solutions, the final subsection to deal with Hegelian resolutions will exhibit how Giussani’s theory translates in practice when it comes to dealing with real problems, which are always problems *for someone*, i.e., before they are thought of as problems for everyone.

### *Ethical Application*

The quotation below exhibits the tendency, discussed above, to theorize particular problems, treating them as universals that attend general solutions.

You await a deeper rapport with the Mystery of your life, that is, with Christ; with the man John and Andrew met, who is your destiny. This is clear as day.

---

<sup>108</sup> Cf. the ninth circle of hell in *Inferno*, XXXI – XXXIV.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love – in Sixteen Shewings*, revelation XIV. Also quoted by T.S. Eliot, “Four Quartets: Little Gidding III,” in *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, 205-206.

It is lack of clarity regarding this point that leads us to make so many futile efforts: and that is because we prefer particular solutions to this certainty: the temptation to foresee particular movements, particular changes, in short, to fix for ourselves what might happen tomorrow, to imagine ourselves what tomorrow should be all about. Instead, in front of that certainty, we never know what might happen, except one thing. We are called to affirm only one thing, because it alone happens without question: a deeper relationship with Christ (*AD*, 58-59)

The concept of sacrifice recommends an approach to life that anticipates the harmonious resolution of conflict in a fully dramatic sense. It is dramatic precisely because the journey to truth is fraught with the free interplay of rational beings whose actions range from sin, error, and outright rejection of the Divine, to repentance, reparation, and loving acceptance. Beauty, linked to sacrifice, is the object of perception in every circumstance. I call this formula general, because it applies to all men, at all times, in all places, and abstract, because it does not stem from actual problems that arise.

The following exchange between Giussani and a member of *Memores Domini* exhibits how the general and the abstract are used to answer the concrete and particular. The issue in question concerns whether reading significance out of existence can be applied to a case of dissatisfaction concerning the interrogator's place of work.

[*Audience:*] There's something I'd like to understand better. Last time you mentioned that communality is the place where a person's personality comes to light, begins to move itself, to be moved, to be stirred. I can relate to this when I think of a friendly reality [*realtà amica*], such as the house [of the *Memores Domini*]. But, at other times, I can't understand how a reality can touch my 'I' as affectivity [*possa toccare il mio io come affettività*]: for example, at work (*AD*, 131).

The questioner has learned from Giussani that the subject can grow more into her personality through an experience of "communality." "Communality," for Giussani, refers to the process of deriving energy for Christian/humanizing action from a community that inspires such action. The method for generating this energy, as taught in the present text, involves looking at reality with a gaze of affection for being and is itself open to being provoked in love by that reality (reiterating that

being is made intrinsically for self-giving and receiving). The questioner's experience of life in the community where she lives has legitimated this rule through empirical experience. But the same rule applied to her work in a secular milieu, i.e., outside the community of *Memores Domini*, has produced a different result, leaving her dissatisfied and unfulfilled, affecting her sense of identity. The questioner wants to understand why the rule does not seem to work in the same way in her other milieu of action. The recommended solution is as follows:

[Giussani:] The presupposition of Christianity is this: Being is good. The Being from which you were created is good, thus whatever else with which you come into contact is good. If it starts to go bad that's because something in you has either forgotten that from which you were made, or because it has become the object of a tempestuous fury, a trap, that is, a temptation. In such a case, that which is good from its nature does not 'become bad,' but 'draws you [to it] in some way that's wrong': it is the manner in which it calls to you that is wrong. Therefore, you should not leave, abandon, cut; rather, take note, redeem, heal, save. [...] the greatest sin we can commit is to be indifferent to the world (to say, 'let them save themselves'), an absence of mission or – what amounts to the same thing – an absence of witness. The Resurrection is in fact the historical event that takes mission and witness seriously (*AD*, 131).

The notion of sacrifice is applied to a problem concerning dissatisfaction in the workplace. There is no situation that sacrifice, conjoined to the possibility of beauty, cannot redeem, according to Giussani. Here, the beautiful is the synthesis of life's experiences, not just the beauty of the created world that intimates God's existence such as a work of art intimates the genius of the Master Craftsman. Beauty gestures at the meaning, purpose, and destiny of the created world, rendering every event eternally significant before the backdrop of the divine plan. The beautiful, in this way, is connected to the primal phenomenon of the *Gestalt*, the primary character of which is not only providential gift, but ontological positivity. And every event, even the most tragic, is an invitation to contemplate the whole. As Giussani says, "That is why the [CL] Movement has always sought to underscore a positive outlook: whatever you come up against, whatever you encounter, is an invitation. The object [before you] is a vocation: it calls you; that of which you are made is what calls you. This is so true that it corresponds to you. The more it corresponds to you, the more it becomes the object of an attachment (*AD*, 131)." Ontological openness leads, by

some unchartable process, to the ontologically positive, the harmonious resolution of life's unresolved conflicts. What is significant along the way is not the minutiae that set up the opposing poles of a dilemma, but the process that leads to the integration of binaries in the whole and, of course, the whole itself, which incorporates every particular to which we may assign a universal value.

Therefore, Giussani's anticipation of beauty is a fundamentally theoretical approach to ethics, which, nevertheless, aspires to be practical. Its formulations are in the form of generalizations, and its prescriptions are those of intention rather than extension, formally stated in terms of natures and properties.<sup>110</sup> Giussani is concerned with the universal deliveries of his various methods as paradigmatic formulae, rather than a spectrum of experience and individual variations within that spectrum, each requiring different, well-discerned responses. His theory begins with human nature, rather than human beings inducted in language, culture, and history. Whereas Giussani can only address his interrogator's questions by speaking of the nature of faith and of the nature of the human person in universal concepts, the interrogator's question reminds us that we can speak of faith and the human person only as a phenomenal range of experience having an inner diversity as well as an external generality. That each person may require a unique solution does not exclude the experience of having shared meanings and symbolic language. And yet Giussani treats diversity as though it were only incidental, when in fact it is ethically significant and not to be confused with relativism. And since there is nothing after language, Giussani's attempt to relate common elements to particular experience actually insinuates a common language, going further, quite possibly, than he himself intended.

### *The Turn to the Subject*

Giussani's tendency to prefer tidy endings was viewed above in light of Hegel's "quest for absolute knowledge." The discovery of this proclivity is in line

---

<sup>110</sup> The diagnostic of particularity, as I expound it here, is indebted to a post-Wittgensteinian reading of the subject (cf. Fergus Kerr's *Theology After Wittgenstein*) and personal development theory in William W. Meissner, "Faith and Subjectivity," in *Life and Faith: Psychological Perspectives on Religious Experience* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 89-110. Giussani, however, might have acquired access to the importance of language through his reading of Balthasar, as noted below. See: Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, I: Truth of the World*, 162-164.

with Quash's excavation of modern tendencies in Balthasar's theology insofar as intellectual and artistic movements in modernity have concentrated on the reconciliation of binaries. At the same time, Giussani's ethical approach, which strongly accentuates affection and, therefore, inter-personal relationships, also opts for an existential and, ultimately, personalist approach to the problem of religious belief and practice, setting up the "humanizing process" as a universal goal, rather than moral obedience to God's law, as traditional invocations of Catholic ethics have done, risking the charge of moralism. The importance assigned to the individual, as exhibited, for instance, in Giussani's development of the concept of correspondence, configures the act of faith according to the subject's cognitive and affective relationship to what is known, rather than according to the content of what is known.

Symptoms of this shift away from "moralism," consistent with the emphasis on relationship, exhibit a tendency to root the subject's response to an object of apprehension in the heart, rather than in the mind or the will. In the context of Giussani's text on beauty, stemming as it does from the author's interest in the act of faith and the new conditions of belief and practice in post-industrial Milan (mainly secularism and anti-clericalism), the emphasis falls on the subject's existential "yes." This "yes," on par with Mary's paradigmatic *fiat*, is predicated, for Giussani, on the ideal of authenticity, which underscores the human and spiritual journey to discovering and consolidating the "I." It is signalled by a turn to the concept of the subject, generally, and yet recovers the constitutive role of particularity by invoking the full dimension of interiority. Thus, the longstanding emphasis on the transmission of doctrine, and its mature appropriation through the cultivation of virtue and the aid of grace, is replaced by the self-conscious discovery of an innate predisposition to the Infinite. Giussani exhibits this new emphasis (attributed variously to St. Augustine and René Descartes), often in connection with references to Kierkegaard, through the development of the psychological categories of human dynamism, maturity, the authenticity of the "I," and the drama of choice.<sup>111</sup>

The turn to the subject, despite the risk of individuality and atomization it entails, is directed to restoring faith and morals to civilization by appealing to the subject's will to be who he really is, to the recovery of the true self from its

---

<sup>111</sup> Cf. James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953).

immersion in the common mentality (*la mentalità comune*). William Meissner, using Kierkegaard, has recovered the importance of the will in relation to the concept of choice and discussed its psychological impact on the personality: “Through the medium of [choice], ethical choice in Kierkegaard, the person becomes an individual; he is detached from the crowd, he is made aware of himself as a vital centre of responsibility and selfhood.”<sup>112</sup> There is a good deal of congruity between Meissner and Giussani on the psychological significance of faith – its ability to call forth the authentic “I” from the depths (*TA*, 230). The basic conviction underscored by Giussani, reiterated here through Meissner, is that faith must make a difference to the cohesion of the personality and that grace must make a difference to living a fully Christian life.<sup>113</sup> Rather than expound moral responsibility, as Thomas does, in the dimension of what God permits to take place (the sin for which the sinner is responsible, in contrast to what God wills to take place and what he wills not to take place), Giussani and Meissner consider responsibility under the lens of ethical maturity and its psychological correlates, appealing to the ideal of the authenticity of the “I,” while allowing individual manifestations of the “I” to be expressed diversely. Thus, the rhetoric of authenticity shifts quickly from epistemology to existence. Willing, choosing, loving, grasping, and striving become central acts of faith. Assent and obedience follow a choice that favours wanting to become one’s true self. Indeed, faith both requires maturity and is an act that brings the person to full maturity (*AC*, 347).

Choice, according to Meissner’s psychoanalytic interpretation of Kierkegaard, is synonymous with passion, just as truth, for Giussani, is synonymous with beauty. Kierkegaard writes: “If you will understand me aright, I should like to say that in making a choice, it is not so much a question of choosing the right as of the energy, the earnestness, the pathos with which one chooses. Thereby the personality announces its inner infinity, and thereby, in turn, the personality is consolidated.”<sup>114</sup> To clarify, Kierkegaard marks a difference between choice and deliberation. He writes: “here again you see how important it is that a choice be made, and the *crucial thing is not deliberation*, but the baptism of the will which lifts

---

<sup>112</sup> Meissner, *Life and Faith* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987), 97.

<sup>113</sup> Meissner, *Life and Faith*, 7.

<sup>114</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, vol. II (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 171.



up the choice into the ethical.”<sup>115</sup> Deliberation is evaluation, but it follows taking a choice. Similarly for Giussani, evaluation follows the experience of putting out into the deep and rarely takes the form of deliberation in advance of that step.

The act of faith as conceived by Giussani differs in one important respect from Meissner’s view. Whereas Meissner takes care to note and discuss the “ambiguities of faith,” and systematically identifies stages in the developmental process that correspond to virtuous habits, Giussani sees the realm of faith, like Balthasar, as part and parcel of the quest for certainty, and omits any discussion of habit in the role of virtue formation. The full implications of Giussani’s perspective on certainty will be taken up in the section on observations. For the time being, it is sufficient to note that, for Giussani, the decision to follow an Other, the leap of faith, as it were, eliminates the shadows of self-deception, projection, denial, illusion, doubt, and uncertainty, while for Meissner, the shadows remain, as do also their effects.<sup>116</sup> Meissner, for all his reliance on psychoanalysis and its typically restless striving for resolutions, has, with Kierkegaard’s help, integrated ambiguity and untidy endings in his dynamic account of the act of faith: “And while faith in a sense triumphs over dread, it cannot annihilate that dread. Rather, the dread persists – modulated and suppressed, to be sure, but nonetheless remaining as a constant reminder of human fragility.”<sup>117</sup> Giussani, relying on Balthasar’s theodramatics and its explicit engagement with Hegel, has moved in the opposite direction, anticipating the promise of final redemption in the present, emphasising the *already* of eschatological anticipation, rather than the *not yet*.

### OBSERVATIONS

Beauty, for Giussani, is the object of a temporal and historical process, which relies on perception, but receives its full significance with respect to the heart, the locus of restless longings for infinite satisfaction. Beauty stirs the memory of those longings and intimates their overabundant satisfaction as the *telos* of existence, namely destiny, unites both truth, in an abstract sense, and the good, in a concrete sense. Truth implies universality, *a claim that is recommended to everyone*; whereas

---

<sup>115</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, vol. II (New York: Doubleday, 1959), 173.

<sup>116</sup> Meissner, *Life and Faith*, 92-93.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Meissner, *Life and Faith*, 92-93.

goodness implies an aspect of particularity, *an object that is interesting for me*.

Giussani locates the possibility of synthesis and the individual poles of the universal/particular dialectic within the dynamic process of belief. Put differently, beauty and belief are synonymous insofar as both posit the unity of truth and goodness in the heart, the affective faculty of synthetic judgement. The distinguishing mark of beauty, then, as observed in the concept of destiny,<sup>118</sup> is that it is a synthesis of universal and particular, immanent and transcendent, time and eternity, finite and infinite, and the means through which the individual is drawn into a closer relationship with Christ. For this reason, Giussani places beauty first in the order of intellection, before understanding and striving, centralizing the role and importance of our innate reactions of respect and aversion in the act of faith. At the same time, beauty corrects a tendency both to intellectualize and to moralise faith, establishing belief as an intrinsic facet of life and destiny.

Ethically speaking, then, three terms are intrinsic to beauty, which extend to the process of deliberation: universals, particulars, and the syntheses of both. The fact that Giussani does not explicate the dialectic, leads him to shift emphasis from the pole of universality to the pole of particularity, but this does not mean he wishes to privilege one over the other. The concerns which shape his discussion range from radical individualism (remedied by universals), intellectualised or moralized religiosity (remedied by particulars), and the human composite of mind, will, and heart united in a truth, such as the “Christian claim,” that receives individual expression (affirmed by the synthesis). The dialectical relation between universals and particulars, however, raises other concerns, which Giussani does not address in his concept of synthesis. I have identified two areas of vagueness in the text: 1) whether the idea of beauty as a synthesis, and the presupposition that there is a common heart, can resolve or make sense of disagreements between persons; and 2) whether harmonious resolutions, typical of transcendent aspirations, are within the reach of a fragile humanity.

---

<sup>118</sup> See Robert Di Pede, “Luigi Giussani on the Notion of Christian Friendship,” 91-121.

1. *Whether the idea of synthesis allows for disagreement*

The particulars are united in a universal called beauty. The possibility of beauty is the possibility that previously unresolved tensions will find their harmonious resolution in “the mystery” that unites incommensurables. This possibility plays out as a theological drama, enacted by the God-man relation, the action of grace, the Mystery that makes the individual, the reality that is given, and the concept of fate (destiny). Drama does not evade sin or the tendency to sin, however extraneous and complicating it may be. The emphasis on sin wanes because it is considered in terms of its general cause, the withdrawal from beauty. The affirmation of beauty, like truth and goodness, announces the person’s return to the life of grace. Thus, when disagreement between individuals arises over the nature of an object of apprehension, or when beauty is unapparent, say, in the midst of tragedy, the defect lies on the part of the individual, not in reality itself, which is gift (*donum*). When sin and tragedy intrude on a situation, apparently spoiling beauty, Giussani recommends relinquishing the finite, and recovering a deeper meaning for existence, the infinite.

Giussani’s impersonal account holds up well as an account of ascetical practice, such as when it directs detachment to the possibility of an I-Thou relation. His impersonal account is badly posed, however, when it is recommended as a practical-theory-to-live-by. For one, it forecloses on the possibility of practical deliberation and does away with many of the particulars that factor into prudential judgement, such as time, circumstance, intention, historical precedent, and foresight.

Giussani, of course, is not interested in deliberation or prudence as categories of thought. When confusion results over the pragmatic expectations of his readers, say, in a case of tension between freedom and authority, he assigns blame to some intrinsically disordered attachment or to the unrelenting influence of his main adversary, the common mentality. Sin and the common mentality may indeed be blamed for a great deal of in-authenticity, not least of which is the secularist onslaught against religious traditions; but Giussani’s solution goes further, carrying the impersonal account of beauty over to the arena of practical decision and action. The persistence of abstract theory in Giussani’s own exposition, however, owes in part to this unwarranted transposition. And deeper reason lies in his adoption of

Balthasar's conception of drama and its epic conclusions, indebted as they are to Hegel's brand of drama. For Giussani, there is no configuration of the God-man relation that does not promise the possibility of beauty in the present, where adherence to the Christian fact is lived seriously.

2. *The extent to which harmonious resolutions, typical of transcendent aspirations, are graspable under the inescapable conditions of human fragility.*

Epic endings announce the dawn of certainty and absolute knowledge on the ethical plane. The possibility of beauty in Giussani's account of history, we have seen from our analysis above, participates in Balthasar's epic genre. Meanwhile, Giussani's interlocutors complain persistently of a disparity between the impersonal account of the hundredfold and particular instances of loss which they suffer. They are urged not to pose the problem in terms of a disparity between ideal and reality, a false dichotomy. Contrastingly, even the greatest admirer of Abraham's faith, such as the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*, cannot but notice the shadows that accompanied Abraham's great act of obedience on Mount Moriah.<sup>119</sup> We are dogged, in our fallen condition, by "self-deception, projection, denial, illusion, doubt – in short, uncertainty."<sup>120</sup> If authentic faith is to take root, the shadows must also be resigned. And yet, resignation does not eliminate the recurrence of morally complex situations, the defective effects of deficient causes, and the possibility of untidy endings; nor does faith, in passing beyond resignation, eliminate them. The difference I am underscoring here, relative to Giussani's explicit attempt to explain "how God writes straight with crooked lines," if the matter may be put so crassly, concerns the fact that some endings, while fully dramatic, are effectively untidy.

Giussani bypasses any consideration of the defective effects of deficient causes (cf. Thomas), or the shadows that remain after faith's resignation (cf. Kierkegaard), making it easier for him to anticipate tidy endings. To conclude that Giussani is an unrelenting optimist would be, I think, to make a caricature of him: it

---

<sup>119</sup> Cf. "Abraham I cannot understand, in a certain sense there is nothing I can learn from him but astonishment. If people fancy that by considering the *outcome* of this story [of Abraham and Isaac] they might be moved to believe, they deceive themselves and want to swindle God out of the first movement of faith, the infinite resignation" (Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* [New York: Doubleday, 1954], 48).

<sup>120</sup> Meissner, *Life and Faith*, 92.

is not his intellectual convictions that lead him to say things in one way rather than another, but the conflation of genres that occurs in his attempt to address concerns – some of which are explicit, others implicit – and the logic of the argument he has crafted to address them. His confrontation with ambiguity in the sphere of youth work must have challenged his quest for certainty more than once. The reason the tendency persists, despite its being at odds with his pastoral experience, owes to historical and contextual pressures. I refer mainly to the scientific pretensions of his interlocutors and the concept of freedom conceived as choice, compounded by the menacing influence of behaviourist psychology, the advance of secularism, and the persistence of anti-clericalism. Older modes of evangelisation, such as apologetics, seemed outmoded in confronting these threats to Italian Catholicism. The discovery of an intrinsic anthropological principle by which to ground the act of faith seemed crucially important to successful evangelization.

Giussani's account of beauty participates in the quest for certainty in faith-matters, extending its stability to history where it "smoothes out the folds"<sup>121</sup> and "organizes the flux."<sup>122</sup> The main features of this tendency are epic:

*First*, he assumes his interlocutors to have the necessary human foundations on which to build the ethico-religious outlook on which he expects them to decide and act, whereas, in individual cases, this may not be so. Thus, Thomas asserts, grace builds on nature, it does not replace nature (*gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit*).<sup>123</sup> But Giussani has difficulty meeting the existential and personalist concerns of his audience in a tone more sympathetic to human fragility because the expressed desire to do so demands a built-in tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty that undermines the quest for certainty. Giussani's logic and tone, as a result, are consistent with the ends of systematic theology, viz., the redescription of God's action in terms of abiding universal significance, and, by extension, the ends of the Magisterium, to teach, legislate, and judge.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Dramatik* II.1, 48, quoted in Quash, "Drama and the Ends of Modernity," 146.

<sup>122</sup> Pickstock, "Necrophilia: The middle of modernity," 407-408; quoted in Quash, "Drama and the Ends of Modernity," 148.

<sup>123</sup> *In Secundum Librum Sententiarum* d. 9, q. 1, obj. 8; see also *Summa Theologiae*, 1, q. 1, a. 8, resp. 2.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Quash, "Drama and the Ends of Modernity," 146-147.

*Second*, the preference for epic conclusions leads him away from any practical consideration of the category of what God permits, i.e., the category of sin for which the sinner is responsible. As a result, prudence and discursive reasoning are not required by his account of “dwelling”, i.e., the subject’s relation to the world does not anticipate disagreement among individuals. Instead, interlocutors are assumed to have the same questions, the same concerns, the same axioms.

*Third*, Giussani can be rather weak when it comes to acknowledging the natural dependency that we have on one another for what we know. He recognizes the indispensable influence of the education he received from his mother, on the one hand, but locates judgements in the heart, on the other hand. In other words, he assumes that intuitions are first nature, rather than second nature, and that, insofar as they are indelibly stamped on the heart, they are universal, rather than particular. He even goes so far as to claim that, among honest/mature men and based on the deliveries of the heart, there is agreement on what is meant by the “I,” when, in fact, there is disagreement, which cannot be settled by recurrence to the heart.

Balthasar, contrastingly, wrote beautifully about language, acknowledging our natural dependency, even in the spiritual realm of things. Had Giussani been familiar with the following passage, he might not have insisted so strongly on the innateness of intuitions; rather, he may have tried to work out a logic for resolving practical problems that took full account of the fact that the subject’s judgments, the contents of the “I,” as it were, are inconceivable outside of tradition and culture:

The child who awakens to consciousness does not enter into the world as a pure spirit in order to tackle the problem of expression from scratch. Rather, the child awakens from subspiritual life, where there was already a natural relation of expression between inside and outside and where these natural correspondences between signification and the signified were always already saturated with human and spiritual expressive relations. [...] The living form of man’s truth unfolds from a single seed as imperceptibly as the bodily organism grows up. [...] It is sustained both by the energies of the subject, whose operation originates from within, and the influences of the objective, outside world and the environment, which gradually introduce the new being into humanity’s traditions and commonly accepted expressive forms. [...] It is from the vantage point of this radical unity that we must see the relationship between man’s consciousness and his world.<sup>125</sup>

---

<sup>125</sup> Balthasar, *Theo-Logic, 1: Truth of the World*, 162-164.

One who has been influenced by the later Wittgenstein, and takes seriously the concerns he raised against the Cartesian paradigm of the man that “even confronted with Christ turns away to consider the judgement of his own conscience and to hear the voice of his own reason,”<sup>126</sup> will be struck by Balthasar’s interest in language.<sup>127</sup> Giussani was not at all attuned to this question. A more pressing concern for Giussani was that his youngsters admit in their hearts that God could not but be known and loved and that the Catholic faith of their inheritance could not but be correspondent to the natural needs they felt within. Giussani might very well have felt ill at ease with the idea of cultural-linguistic dependency attributed here to Balthasar. The whole claim of language philosophy, after all, could be misconstrued as behaviourism – the theoretical counterpart of political “systems” which threatened to undermine the intermediary institutions Giussani struggled to protect.

Giussani did not seem to mind that, in spite of his theory of a universal heart, disagreement over universals recurred, nor did he ever tire of insisting that the heart already knew the religious and moral truth which it was tempted to evade. While universal and timeless truths are intrinsic to Christian ethics, and while the world may be treated as a sign of the Creator, just as an effect points to its cause, universal agreement in morally difficult circumstances cannot be presupposed on the basis of the heart (or its corollary: the encounter), for beliefs refract differently through language, culture, history, and context, and prepare the expectations of subjects differently. A theory which overlooks disagreement can also overlook, unwittingly, the importance of tradition and culture as tools for resolving disagreement, and this assumption, unfortunately, carries important pedagogical implications.

### CONCLUSION

Modern consciousness, according to Giussani, seemed to be suffering a malaise of meaning and purpose which he, like Kierkegaard, blamed on the uncritical adoption of the herd mentality. In expounding the “possibility of beauty,” as in

---

<sup>126</sup> A summary of Kant’s “Cartesian paradigm,” in Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of the Good* (1970; London, New York: Routledge Ltd., 2002), 80. Quoted in Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (London: SPCK, 1997), 3-5. Kerr makes numerous references to Wittgenstein’s attempt to “revise, incorporate into a larger design, or simply obliterate” the Cartesian paradigm.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. “Above all, [Balthasar] writes excellently on language [...]” (Fergus Kerr, “Balthasar,” in *Twentieth-Century Theologians*, 129).

recommending the “method of *The Religious Sense*,” he meant to combat complacency, a variety of Kierkegaardian despair, teaching his interlocutors to evaluate different objects of apprehension in order that they might be able more personally to appropriate them. Personal appropriation, for Giussani, meant judging objects in relation to the meaning and purpose of life. To this end, his efforts went, above all, to strengthening religious belief and practice, rendering his reflections on the act of faith sympathetic to existential and personalist concerns. Giussani’s focus on personal appropriation, therefore, leads him to treat the “religious phenomenon” with reference to its significance *for me* and *for you*. For him, the subject’s response to faith is an affective reflex, implying that reactions of respect and aversion to the object of the world are intrinsic to the heart’s nature. The roles of the intellect and the will manifest themselves only in a second movement. Thus, Giussani redefined the point of entry into the mysteries of faith from teaching to experience. No longer was authentic religious belief the rehearsal of doctrine, or obedience to the Ten Commandments, but the response to a phenomenological encounter commensurate with its ontological value. Ultimately, it is the assimilation of subject and object that renders beauty a possibility. Beauty, like the other transcendentals, presupposes the self-communicative structure of being, and the intrinsic reality of the world as a gift. It also points to its Maker, as an effect points to its cause. Giussani, it seems, crafted the cure to the malaise of modern consciousness through beauty, using the idea of subject-response to waken his interlocutors from dormancy, to insist that there is more to reality than meets the eye. Giussani used beauty (*positività*) to repair the negativity (*negatività*) caused by Nietzschean approaches to the struggle for freedom. He overextended beauty, however, to effect repairs in the realm of ethics, conflating practical-theories-to-live-by with impersonal accounts.

This blend of ethics and epistemology in Giussani’s account of beauty recurs also to his preoccupation with “sawdust Thomism,” and the desire to render philosophical theology relevant to daily existence. Following a certain strand of Transcendental Thomism pioneered in Leuven, beauty exemplifies Giussani’s metaphysical approach to pragmatic questions. The logic with which he expounds the concept, deriving indirectly from Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, through Balthasar, involves a theory of ethics, based on perception, that broadens the object



of intellection from the strictly empirical to the metaphysical. To this end, “everything that happens,” including moral quandaries, carries significance for the subject and brims over with meaning when viewed against the backdrop of destiny. The purpose of (ethical) reflection, then, would be to establish that meaning, which then gives shape to decision and action. Ethics begins with the affective faculty, and integrates the intellect and will only in a second movement.

The account of beauty, then, which is a theory of the subject’s affective relation to truth and goodness, is also the source of concrete solutions to real problems. At once concerned with the immediate, Giussani’s answers consistently derive from the infinite. His approach is to translate the subject from the realm of immanence to the realm of transcendence through an evaluation of an encounter through which one is struck. But in order that an encounter may reorient (*convertere*) the subject to a transcendent end through its impact on the affections – a case, *par excellence*, of the “possibility of beauty” – the subject must first consent to being affected. Being affected entails *a priori* taking a posture of openness toward the world, i.e., dwelling with affection (a recommendation that gestures at the title of his book, *Affezione e dimora*). Giussani recommends this stance as a manner of “dwelling,” and identifies its proper operation as “gazing.” Dwelling and gazing entail seeking correspondences with the heart by looking beneath surface appearances to the ultimate ground of reality. What reverberates in the heart derives from the centre of being. The concept of correspondence, then, at its most basic level, presupposes an ontology based on reciprocity and communion. To close oneself off to such an ideal would be to go against the true “I,” which is intrinsically made for self-giving and receiving.

Certain tendencies, discussed above, compete with each other, affecting the overall clarity and coherence of Giussani’s account. The tendency to propound a theory for all men, at all times, and in all places exhibits the correlative tendency to address particular cases with general solutions. But this compromises the pragmatic purport of the text insofar as method *x* may not be suited to resolving problem *y*. Methods, in other words, must be suited to their objects, as Giussani himself recommends (*RS*, 3). The choice of a method, however, requires more than the phenomenological (read: essentially abstract) apprehension of an object, such as that

to which Giussani appeals, unwittingly, using perception and beauty to address the problem of the act of faith. A decisive decision regarding method must take stock of the act of faith *for me* and *for you*. A general theory of perception, contrastingly, universalizes the problem of faith, rendering it impersonal and devoid of personal significance. But this undermines Giussani's existential and personalist sensitivity. How does he foil his own explicit attempt to recover the importance of the individual's existential "yes"?

I reply that particular cases are made up of questions and axioms which have contextual and historical roots. Giussani recognizes the importance of the "totality of factors," including subjective and objective levels of meaning, but trades the historical and contextual grounding of a problem for its grounding in an intrinsic principle, be it the herd mentality or original sin. Giussani's attempt to deliver particular solutions in light of the critique of ideology and the reality of sin is weakened by his quest for absolute knowledge. He bypasses the possibility of uncertainty and ambiguity, recommending the possibility of beauty, *positività*, as the charism of CL and as a stance with which to face life.

Uncertainty and ambiguity, however, play an important role in ethics insofar as they allow cases to be treated as variants attending particular solutions. A fundamental stance of openness to being, which receives the world as gift and remains open to mystery, is not the same as referring a morally difficult circumstance to the concept of beauty. The plurality of cases that results from the prior admission of uncertainty, however, threatens the quest for stability, which Giussani deems crucial to the ontological grounding of his argument – and rightly so, for ontology concerns the universal ground and structure of being. Giussani's intuitionism, however, was inspired by the drive for "moral certainty." To this extent, it was inspired by the same Kantian drive for objectivity that spawned Transcendental Thomism. To criticise Giussani for producing Cartesianisms for lack of awareness regarding the concerns of language philosophy seems unfair given that his original question had to do with the autonomous act of judgement regarding matters of faith. Giussani's concerns were pastoral, in other words, not philosophical, and his appeal to beauty was both an attempt to enliven in his students the love of truth and to ensure that the truth was pursued under the affective dimension of the heart that

longed for satisfaction. It might be pointed out, nevertheless, that Cartesianisms were something Giussani tried to get his students to overcome, and that the epistemology underpinning the concept of beauty prevented him from conveying this goal clearly and consistently at all times.

# Conclusion

*The House of the Salutation of the Mother of God at Smithfield does not appear to have been distinguished from its sisters during the fifteenth century by any superior degree of fervour. Like them, however, it had preserved intact the essentials of the Carthusian way of life, and thus provides a striking example of the reward that comes to a body of men, perhaps of no remarkable virtue, who are faithful to the prescriptions of their Rule: the coals remain alight and, though dull, may be kindled to flame by a breath of the Spirit. — Dom David Knowles (1959)<sup>1</sup>*

The overarching goal of Giussani's writing, such as he himself expressed it, was to revitalize the Church so that it would be an incisive and transformative "presence" in society. His main audience from the 1950s onward were university students from Milan and the outlying areas, many of whom were already inducted in the practices of ecclesiastical youth movements (initially *Catholic Action* and *Gioventù Studentesca*, ultimately *Communion and Liberation*). The training Giussani had received at Venegono Seminary during the inter-war period, shaped variously through the writings of Rousselot, Blondel, Möhler, Newman, Guardini, and others (all controversial fonts of theology at the time), had convinced him that the centrality of Christian faith in modern times could only be restored by demonstrating its relevance to the concrete concerns and irritations of ordinary life. Giussani's attempt to articulate "moral certainty" on ultimate questions (e.g., the meaning of work and the purpose of existence) was shaped by the desire to introduce younger generations of Catholics to an expression of faith that both provided solutions to real problems and was sympathetic to the human person in terms of his "needs and exigencies." Romantic love, friendship, and family are, therefore, Giussani's point of departure.

The problem facing the Church in modern times, namely secularism, was a matter of method, according to Giussani. The methodological problem referred not so much to the Church's evangelization of a new generation of Catholics (though the moralistic, clerical, intellectualized, and pietistic approaches of the past were certainly up for revision), but to the absence of a method through which youngsters

---

<sup>1</sup> David Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. 3, *The Tudor Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 222.

could judge the Christian fact and the Church for themselves. The problem, in other words, was epistemological (how to know the truth), and the reason it needed a solution, Giussani argued, was that it bore existentially and personally on questions very much at the heart of a young person: self-discovery, freedom, fulfillment, and authenticity. In the age in which he lived and worked as a priest and educator what mattered to young people extended to social transformation, often expressed in efforts to redress injustice and relieve suffering and poverty. While many of Giussani's colleagues, particularly in the universities, proposed political ideology (viz., Italian Communism) and the social sciences as sources of repair to social and human fragmentation, he proposed the act (if not the leap) of faith.

The first order of education, then, was to introduce an epistemology that both broke down a priorism and preconceptual thought to allow objects, such as the Church, to show themselves for what they were. The method of verification, called "correspondence," presupposed that the answers of faith completed what otherwise seemed incomplete in the subject's self-reflective stance on the world. Reality and doctrine were one and the same, Giussani argued, using literature, music, and art eclectically to demonstrate the "religious sense" lurking beneath even the most secular of musings.

Giussani's sensitivity to the institutional alienation felt by younger Catholics, seen from a different vantage point, moved him to take their attachment to modern ideals seriously. Even in doing so, Giussani largely overlooked their philosophical sources in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment and so unwittingly embedded Cartesian-Kantian tendencies from which he had been trying to escape in his own writing. His philosophical naiveté, nevertheless, does not take away from an otherwise noble goal. Giussani believed he could achieve the best results for tradition and its longevity if individuals were somehow permitted, ideally with assistance, to attain their modern ends within the parameters of ecclesial communion. Within this process, where self-reflection plays a crucial role, the individual comes to realize that the deepest desires of his heart were implanted by God precisely that they might shape a person's life in determinate ways, and that their infinite nature was a clue to the ultimate purpose of personal action: the consummation of all desire in

God. The method of judgment, and its emphasis on the heart, the seat of desire, purports to reconcile the polarities that typically disrupt the integral relation of life and faith: external truth and inner judgement, obedience and freedom, sacrifice and beauty, authority and friendship.

The person formed in Giussani's method is one in whom the act of faith is prompted by a prior awareness of the infinite desire within. The wish to know reality, to live out of a deep and abiding love for humanity, to perceive and be transformed by the beautiful, to love and be loved flow from this first act of self-awareness which leaves one begging. Loving obedience to the Magisterium, a second step, as it were, results from the insight, gleaned through years of experience, that doctrine is connatural with desire. Giussani's self-reflective subject, therefore, discovers truth in correspondence with desire, freedom in correspondence with obedience, certainty and stability in correspondence with transcendent beauty, and identity in correspondence with friendship. Correspondence, of course, also involves the assimilation between subjects and objects, such as doctrine and the "I." But I have argued that subjects and objects are actually separate, distinct, and in complex relation. Through such an assimilation, however, Giussani believes the individual will be able to speak about truth, freedom, and beauty in a fully transcendent way, while responding with sensitivity to the affective and emotional dimension of the human person. The starting point of all reflection on desire and satisfaction, it is worth recalling, is the self.

There is a great deal to admire in Giussani's approach. At the same time, his attempt to deliver practical-theories-to-live-by is often overshadowed by the impersonal account of the thinking and knowing subject. Moreover, the impersonal account itself lacks an adequate theoretical apparatus at its origin. These weaknesses lead Giussani both to replicate the Cartesian-Kantian tendencies he seeks to escape and to produce the picture of a subject more dependent for his moral judgements on the inner experience produced by the encounter with the Movement than on his teachers in the tradition and the cultivation of virtue.

These problems could perhaps be overlooked, given the inspiring content of Giussani's insights in areas of contemporary pastoral concern, were it not for the

inability of his account to give robust replies to some rather unavoidable moral questions that arise within his treatment of various themes. Indeed, his optimistic and over-resolved approach to problems seems inclined to overlook the recurrence of certain pertinent questions: e.g., the problem of rival intuitions, the lingering effects of sin, the divergence of wills between friends, the inability to prevent uncertainty, ambiguity, and crisis. At the conclusion of my chapters, I identified questions that stem from these problematic areas. In my experience of attending the Schools of Community in Montreal, Edinburgh, and Toronto, these questions have also been posed by lay readers. Can the heart err in judgement and if so how do communities of the faithful deal with disagreement and the divergence of opinions? When the “communitarian phenomenon” is absent, as is the case when one must stand alone in the public square to defend the faith, what other sources provide the “energy” needed for bravery and perseverance in the founding and maintenance of institutions? Does the logic of beauty sufficiently resolve and restore order to life’s unlovely situations and if so does the recurrence of uncertainty and crisis indicate a problem in one’s outlook on reality (e.g., cynicism)? Can friendship and community survive divergence of wills, injury, and betrayal by recurring to a common destiny of which there is but a faint memory in the midst of the turmoil of sin and division? And if so how are charity and unity restored?

My own writing was motivated by the frustration of readers who complained of difficulty understanding and applying Giussani’s practical-theories-to-live-by to cases in ordinary life. I traced this frustration to areas of vagueness in Giussani’s work. From the beginning, I have treated these areas aetiologically as symptomatic of the author’s unarticulated worries. Using Peter Ochs’ method of pragmatic reading, making good use of historical context, intellectual biography, and the leading tendencies in Giussani’s writing, I tried to reconstruct these unarticulated worries. We began to see gradually how Giussani’s writings stemmed from his attempt to meet the diverse expectations of two kinds of audience. On the one hand, Giussani’s ecclesiastical superiors expected him to attack modernity and defend the Magisterium; on the other hand, youngsters expected the Church’s teachings to correspond to their own desires and to appear as robust as the hard sciences if they

were to be at all worthy of appropriation and integration into life. Giussani's attempt to provide the ultimate answer to a variety of practical questions touching on the moral life soon led him to universalize his claims. The "method" he pioneered for the youth in Milan was now incumbent on all peoples, of all times, and in all places.

Giussani's universalizing tendency obstructs the view I have demonstrated, through the work of excavation, of a direct connection between his account and its historically-contingent origins in pastoral needs. The pastoral needs of the Church, of course, precisely on account of their imbeddedness in time and context, are ever changing. The critical observations of Giussani's texts within each of my chapters stem from the pastoral needs in the time and context in which I live and work as a Catholic educator. They are motivated by a different set of concerns, therefore, than Giussani's: viz., a pervasive forgetfulness of our dependency on one another for who we are and what we become. I have tried, nevertheless, to limit my critique only to the areas of inconsistency and philosophical weakness suggested by Giussani's account itself, which would affect the self-understanding of students under Giussani's programme of study as much as those under the programme I administer at *The Francis de Sales Centre* in Toronto.

Two areas cry out for determination in this regard, both affecting the revitalization of Christianity and the rehabilitation of the Church as a moral authority in Giussani's milieu and my own: viz., the role and importance of tradition and virtue in the formation of younger generations of Catholics. The unconventional manner of Giussani's treatment of judgement, freedom, and beauty, particularly his emphasis on the heart, I believe, exhibits not so much his innovation, as his sensitivity to the ambivalent regard of youngsters to tradition and virtue-cultivation. The assiduous attempt to revitalize Christian faith by not recommending rule-following accounts for the role and importance Giussani assigns to the heart in the discovery of moral axioms and the proposition that God exists. But insight into difficult moral circumstances and heroic action are not necessarily first nature, as Giussani argues. The moral agent is actually far more dependent on training in a tradition and the cultivation of virtue for the kinds of evaluations he makes and the actions to which these lead than on the promptings of the heart. Indeed, the heart, insofar as we may



turn to it for moral guidance, is itself shaped by education and habit. The dependency of the heart for what we are able to say about moral questions or God raises the inescapable relationship between masters and novices in a tradition, including the role and importance of institutions in expounding and transmitting a tradition to successive generations.

The cultural conditions in post-war Italy made it disadvantageous for Giussani to expound education in terms of the dependency of a pupil on his masters. For this reason, he adopts a heuristic approach to moral decision-making rooted in the intuitive, purportedly innate, deliveries of the heart. Further, by framing decision and action as a risk, the “risk of education,” as it were, rather than as the deliveries of one’s prior induction in language, culture, and tradition, Giussani was able to play up the theme of freedom, which was important to his young interlocutors. In this way, Giussani distanced himself from Stalinism and Fascism (including Nazism), not to mention the Church’s prurient approach to sexuality and modernity. His introduction of the concept of authority as friendship and of obedience within friendship – both rather late additions to his thought – clearly prevent his young interlocutors from entirely disengaging from the tradition and the communities to which they belong, venturing out on an unknown territory of self-discovery.

An alternative route to obedience, unexplored by Giussani, where tradition would be the ordinary ambit of flourishing and the practice of virtue the means to flourishing, would not necessarily have had to resort to dogmatism. A pupil receives from his masters the tools needed for the discovery and full development of his God-given identity, which leaves him with a debt of gratitude similar to the moral debt incurred in friendship. These tools are derived from the tradition’s deepest sources of repair to life’s most difficult and challenging questions. The ability to appeal to tradition in this way awakens one’s awareness of his dependency, and it is this awareness that provokes both gratitude and an acute awareness of the fact that we are both rational and dependent animals. To treat tradition as a source of identity and repair, as opposed to viewing it either as a relic of a bygone era or as a seal stamped onto the practices of a community to announce papal fidelity, is to treat it as a living and breathing source of wisdom.

The pupil who is deeply travelled in tradition may, by various means, avail himself of *memory* (e.g., the life of Christ, the martyrology, hagiographies, ecclesiastical history, and moral precedents, etc.), *narrative* (e.g., accounts of truth, freedom, and beauty, etc.), and *logic*, a systematic way of making important distinctions (e.g., mercy and justice, freedom and responsibility, compassion and absolution). Gradually deepening his understanding of tradition, the pupil becomes a more knowledgeable and responsible appropriator of truth, ready to face life's moral questions with deeper insight. It may take time for him to come around to shared understandings of what tradition means and how it can help shape the decisions and actions of individuals and communities, but it remains a fact that his prior induction in a tradition (or a variety of traditions, as it were) is inescapable. It follows that the deeper one's understanding is of the tradition to which one belongs the better and more robust will one's ability be to apply its wisdom to life.

Throughout this thesis we have seen how the accounts of judgement, freedom, and beauty were based on Giussani's epistemology; how the heart's "needs" and "exigencies," in other words, were (a) the origin of man's "religious sense;" (b) the criterion by which to judge external reality with "moral certainty;" and (c) among the "totality of factors" on which decision and action are based. We have now also compared Giussani's picture of the self-reflective moral agent with the picture of a moral agent who is dependent on others for the needs and exigencies he brings to moral questions. To a large extent, Giussani is claiming that moral precepts are connatural with the human person; that an innate goodness in the human person responds viscerally either with respect to the encounter with goodness or with aversion to the encounter with evil. But this phenomenological ontology, as it were, is still a long way off from Giussani's further claim that the subtler deliveries of the heart in moral matters are innate.

The dependency of pupils on masters in a tradition goes hand-in-hand with the argument that moral deliberation and virtuous action are enabled by the extensiveness of one's training in a tradition. Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* (right practical reason) and Thomas Aquinas's notion of prudence are fruits of education. Both notions seem, by and large, to have been replaced by the notion of the heart

through Giussani's response to the new conditions obtaining for belief and practice in modernity. Prudence, as described by Thomas in *Summa Theologiae* II-II q. 49, a. 15, involves the application of universals to particulars and is moderated by the awareness that there are as many means to ends as there are variety of persons and cases. The component parts of prudence are dependent on one's deep training in a tradition:

- (a) *Memory*: knowledge of history and historical precedent, for experience is a teacher of what is *true* in the majority of cases;
- (b) *Intelligence*: knowledge of universals, for the value of particular ends must be weighed against the *value of* ultimate ends;
- (c) *Docility*: the willingness to be taught the value of ends by elders, for experience has given them *insight* into principles;
- (d) *Shrewdness*: knowledge of how to make important and necessary connections, for to grasp quickly *what ought* to be done is to find the middle term of a syllogism;
- (e) *Reason*: the ability to reason from general to particular, for prudence requires the correct application of law-answers to wisdom-questions;
- (f) *Foresight*: the ability to anticipate the results of action in particular cases, for the ability to foresee the results of action on future contingents allows generative ends to be achieved and destructive ends to be averted;
- (g) *Circumspection*: the ability to apply remedies according to the variety of cases and the many combinations of circumstances they contain, for what is healing in one instance may be deleterious in another;
- (h) *Caution*: the ability to discern both the good and the evil in contingent matters of action, for just as what is false can be mingled with what is true, so what is good can be mingled with what is evil.

Thomas adds to this description the different realms of prudence (domestic, juridical, political, and military) and includes a description of the different applications of virtue to different circumstances. In all events, the final judge to which one is bound, one's own conscience, is not the manifestation of a particular endowment from birth, but of the moral education to which one is beholden. According to Thomas: "in

matters of prudence man stands in very great need of being taught by others, especially old folk who have acquired a sense of understanding of the ends in particular matters.”<sup>2</sup> It is significant, of course, that the section which follows his discussion of prudence concerns good counsel and the Holy Spirit.

In order to explain the implications that result from my assessment above, I wish to turn to an example from history, which illustrates some of the main points I wish to make about Giussani’s work. Since my concern lies with moral deliberation, and Aristotle thought that a man’s true stature is revealed in unforeseen circumstances,<sup>3</sup> the example I present below illustrates how the heroic action of an otherwise inconspicuous group of men depended on their deep training in a tradition. I refer to the events that transpired at the London Charterhouse, just before its dissolution in the sixteenth century.<sup>4</sup> The material that I am about to introduce, which is both striking and new, can cloud things unnecessarily should its relevance to the assessment above be misplaced; however, I think it is desirable to consider this example as a way to understand the dramatic difference that tradition, virtue, and the life of prayer make on decision and action in addition to what Giussani already teaches about judgement, freedom, and beauty.

When it is believed, for example, that the sources of moral criteria lie within, as Giussani argues, and that these are confirmed by their purported manifestation in all men of good will, e.g., as exhibited by original awe and the desire for infinite satisfaction, the result displaces the role of tradition and virtue in the formation of younger generations of Catholics, treating tradition (perhaps unwittingly) as an afterthought. Rather than viewing tradition as inescapable in the formation of the heart, the idea that such deliveries are innate leads tradition to be tacked on to the practices of a community from the outside. Tradition, consequently, can only avail itself as the outward manifestation of the community’s desire to profess fidelity to

---

<sup>2</sup> *Summa Theologiae* II-II q. 49, a. 15, ad. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. “Bravery in unforeseen danger springs more from character, as there is less time for preparation; one might resolve to face a danger one can foresee, from calculation and on principle, but only a fixed disposition of courage will enable one to face sudden peril” (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book III, 1117a19, §4).

<sup>4</sup> Cited in Jonathan Robinson, *The Mass and Modernity: Walking Backward to Heaven* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 292-293.

the Magisterium, embodied in the practice of following rubrics and customs, but not as a living and breathing source of wisdom.

The point of contrasting Giussani's account with the London Charterhouse paradigm is to capture more precisely, through the real life of real men, how tradition and virtue habitually operate in unforeseen circumstances to affect rational thought and deliberative action, and to consider how the themes of the preceding chapters – judgement/heart, freedom/community, and beauty/sacrifice – actually depend on tradition for the results to which the Charterhouse example gestures as a paradigm of moral agency. This example highlights, above all, the dependence of novices on masters and the role of tradition in the formation of consciences. It illustrates how truth limits freedom, where freedom is defined as autonomy. It also points to the reality of unlovely situations, the inability to control life and eliminate the possibility of crisis. It dramatises that one's God-given identity is discovered and realized in the prayerful worship of the Church and the keeping of the Ten Commandments, and that it is meaningless to speak of identity without acknowledging the debt of gratitude owed to the teachers who contributed to the formation of the moral self.

In 1535 Westminster passed the Treason Act under the terms of which anyone who failed to acknowledge the king as “the only supreme head on earth of the Church in England,”<sup>5</sup> was to be charged with treason and sentenced to death. Royal commissioners were sent to all the houses of religious orders, including the London Charterhouse, to obtain acknowledgment of the king's supremacy by administering an oath upon the gospels. Those who failed to swear the oath were sent to the Tower of London for execution. In retelling the story, David Knowles presents the picture of the prior, John Houghton, genuinely caught in the grips of a terrifying moral dilemma. A matter of divine faith was at stake, on the one hand, but his chief anxiety lay with the younger members of the community, many of whom he himself had formed in the Carthusian Rule and whose vows he had received. He feared for their perseverance if the house were suppressed, and considered outward compliance to save them from apostasy. Knowing that their trial before the

---

<sup>5</sup> *Luminarium: Encyclopedia Project*, “The First Act of Succession, 1534,” <http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/firstactofsuccession.htm>, accessed August 15, 2010.

commissioners was imminent, Houghton set aside three days to decide how he and his community were to respond to the oath required of them:

On the first, all made a general confession; on the second all, led by Houghton himself, asked pardon of each of his brethren in turn for all offences; on the third, the prior sang a Mass of the Holy Spirit for guidance. When he did so, and the moment came for the elevation of the consecrated Host, all felt in their hearts, and to some it seemed that they heard, either as a gust of wind or as an echo of harmony, a breath of the Spirit Whose counsel they had implored. The celebrant was for some minutes unable to continue the Mass, and at the subsequent chapter he spoke of his experience thankfully indeed, but with an exhortation that all should abide in God's grace with prayer, humble and fearful. His own constant prayer was that of Christ for his disciples: 'Holy Father, keep them whom thou hast given me in thy name.'<sup>6</sup>

The monks were tried at Westminster Hall on 28-29 April, 1535. They were pronounced guilty of the charge of high treason and sentenced to death:

By the royal command they were executed in their monastic habits, with the hair shirts of their Rule beneath. Each at the foot of the gallows was offered pardon if he would submit, and on their refusal the barbarous sentence was carried out with every circumstance of cruelty. Houghton, the first to die, embraced his executioner and addressed the vast crowd, taking them to witness against the day of judgement that he died rather than deny the teachings of God's Church. He bore the agony of the butchery, aggravated by the tough hair shirt, with what seemed a more than human patience; conscious to the end, he died invoking the Lord he had loved and followed to the Cross. He was forty-eight years of age.<sup>7</sup>

How the Carthusians went about deciding on the oath highlights the spiritual fonts of grace, including the liturgical prayer of the Church, and the dependency of each monk on the Carthusian Rule and on good teachers. Knowles pays particular homage to the image of Houghton as a steward of tradition and the dutiful teacher of the younger members of the community:

[...] the picture that emerges is of a man capable not only of inspiring devoted attachment, but of forming in others a calm judgement and a heroic constancy equal to his own. He found himself head of a family in which youth was predominant; more than half the community were under the age of twenty-five

---

<sup>6</sup> Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. III, 230-231.

<sup>7</sup> Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. III, 232.

when he began his short rule; no doubt they were impressionable enough. But it was not the most impressionable who followed him to the end of his journey; [...] the seventeen who did not fail had learnt from him to depend on no human guide, to fear neither sharp pain nor material want, and to be true, through all extremes of suffering and desolation, to the purpose of their profession.<sup>8</sup>

What the philosopher may gather from the literature surrounding Houghton's life is that he was able to develop his character fully because of his observance of the Carthusian Rule. Grace, we may say, built on the natural strength acquired in steadfast obedience to the Rule and the willingness to be taught by his own teachers. Thus, in a moment of terrible crisis, when either his nerve might have failed or the impulse to live might have beckoned him to take control of his life, Houghton stood by his conscience and surrendered his will to God. With conviction and courage he accepted full responsibility for doing so. Not all the monks who admired Houghton were prepared to follow him to the Tower of London. The lures of the world, the attraction of "false and flickering lights," as Knowles puts it, led a few to follow their own hearts instead (if I may use the term "heart" equivocally): those who delighted in honours and dreams, those who sought to escape from solitude and from themselves, and those whose irresponsible vagaries and treachery had compromised the integrity of the house that had sheltered them.<sup>9</sup> Seventeen of the community's members, however – not a negligible number – succeeded in putting the purpose of their religious profession into practice when it counted the most.

How does the moral dilemma faced by these Carthusians enlighten the understanding we attained from Giussani regarding of judgement, freedom, and beauty?

*Judgement*, I have already pointed out extensively, relies on a deep formation in tradition. The rubrics, customs, and practices of the Church in various times and places (e.g., scriptural discernment, liturgical worship, lives of the saints, and obedience to the Ten Commandments, etc.) are themselves the criteria of judgement otherwise sought in the heart. Gut reactions can be ascribed to the heart as well, along with the desire for satisfaction, while the basic intuitions we carry into a moral

---

<sup>8</sup> Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. III, 224-225.

<sup>9</sup> Knowles, *The Religious Orders in England*, vol. III, 228.

dilemma are acquired through education and materialize in concrete forms of action through our recourse to tradition as a living and breathing source of wisdom.

*Freedom* is freedom to seek and grasp the truth; but precisely for this reason the desire to act with others must at the same time not overtake the necessity of having to stand alone, should the circumstances require, even if doing so were to leave the legitimate need of companionship unfulfilled.

*Beauty* is certainly one of the attributes of God, and its ability to stir our affections and emotions points to the manifestation of God's loving providence in the natural world. But on this side of heaven, there is a whole category of events which God permits that he does not also command, such as the defective effects of deficient causes. While it is always possible to read good out of evil, there is something of the fatalist in the person who maintains that God, in every case, redirects the course of deficient causes to yield redemptive effects. Neither God's foreknowledge, nor his providence, nor his being the First Cause of creation, nor his being Love incarnate, presupposes that all events are intrinsic and necessary to his divine plan for salvation. Human beings are themselves capable of wreaking terrible destruction, even self-destruction, and the freedom God gave the human creature underwrites this possibility, at least in part.

The ensemble of points introduced by the Carthusian paradigm does not invalidate Giussani's thought. Indeed, as seen through the importance Giussani accords both to obedience and the Magisterium (on the one hand), and the "I," freedom, and desire (on the other hand), the practice of turning to the heart for judgements concerning reality is actually meant to produce the best results for tradition and virtue. The Carthusian paradigm illustrates, however, that when the heart, and not tradition and virtue, are the first point of departure in moral deliberation, the dependency of the person on tradition and virtue for practical wisdom remains unacknowledged and potentially undermined by the psychic powers of sin that threaten to undermine commitment to truth. To underestimate our dependency on tradition and authority is to misrepresent the human person as an essentially autonomous moral deliberator. Autonomy, moreover, lends itself to learning morality heuristically, which involves a measure of risk-taking, rather than



through the customs and practices of the tradition. It is doubtful whether an heuristic approach to moral education can lead to true freedom within a living and breathing tradition. As observed earlier, the testing of objects and ends for their intrinsic value against the heart sooner or later necessitates either the heavy-handed imposition of authority to prevent chaos, or the idea that one's participation in the practices of the Movement, namely testing hypotheses against the heart, is tantamount to one's deep formation in the Church. Each of these tendencies responds to an historically-contingent concern which Giussani sought to address. At the same time, they are not entirely commensurable: the moral certainty of the heart needs to be proportioned to the authority of the practices of the Movement; and the freedom to determine one's "I" through the heart's desires needs to be proportioned to the role of the Magisterium as criterion of human authenticity.

It remains a fact, however, that Giussani, in engaging modernity, was essentially a sensitive and dedicated teacher; that the unique features of his writings were determined by the nature of his engagement with modern philosophical concerns; and that his explicit attempt to lead youth in post-War Italy to closer proximity with Christianity and the Church by responding "adequately" and "reasonably" to the exigencies of freedom and authenticity had a wide reach. By the time of his death in 2005, Giussani had achieved international recognition as the founder of an influential new charism in the Catholic Church, sufficiently broad to be of interest also to the ecumenical movement. The hallmark of the charism's openness continues to be its promotion of "affection" for the human person. As Giussani himself put it, commenting in *L'Osservatore Romano*: "What enlivens us is love for our humanity, that is, for the expression of fullness that every man feels."<sup>10</sup>

The re-presentation of the Church in the light of this humanizing ideal remains a point of attraction for the followers and proponents of CL whose focus is on identity and freedom. It expresses itself in the practice of sympathy for the world, the Other, and the "I," and is interpreted from the perspective of a firm doxology, the "moral certainty," as it were, of a personal God through, with, and in whom beauty and fullness emanate and become manifest in the concrete determination of history,

---

<sup>10</sup> Luigi Giussani, "Il valore di alcune parole che segnano il cammino cristiano," in *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 6, 1966, 4.

i.e., God's providential design ("destiny"). Many individuals, through their encounter with CL, have crossed the threshold of the Church and become more serious appropriators of the Catholic tradition. Those formed most deeply by the charism of CL attest with their lives to the fact that Christ alone can make sense of human nonsense; that He alone is able to complete what is incomplete in the person; and that the communities to which we belong have their deepest significance when they themselves result from our affection for humanity based on the desire for satisfaction which only Christ can fill.

# Appendix

## LUIGI GIUSSANI ON THE CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN THE 1950S AND '60S<sup>1</sup>

Interview by Robi Ronza

Translated by Robert Di Pede

*Toward the mid-1950s, Italian society seemed fully balanced and continuous with its historical and cultural past. I felt absolutely that a mentality was still prevalent which was neither disjointed nor opposed to that milieu and family-oriented society in which I had been raised thirty years before. But we were actually dealing with a false equilibrium, maintained only by a formal respect for laws and conventions in which we were no longer believers, and which, therefore, would soon be abandoned. We were relying, then, only on a structural equilibrium: and this was unequivocally manifested by its hesitancy in education. A society that is truly and generatively balanced, in fact, finds the first measure and first confirmation of its own vitality in the generous disposition and commitment of its young people. In the Italy of the 1950s, instead, the better part of these remained enclosed in the modest perimeter of tiny hopes and tiny projects, individualized in their sphere of influence and bourgeois in formulation.*

*Many of the livelier personalities, more conscientious of their *modus vivendi*, took up art and music, particularly jazz. Theirs was an attempt – albeit naïve – to flee the society in which they lived, or else to interpret it from an external vantage point. Along the same lines, and with kindred hopes, their interests turned to phenomena such as ‘mondo-beat’<sup>2</sup> or the ‘happies’ [sic.]. For a select few, the more serious ones, the greatest point of concern found expression in ideological-political commitment – one that was all but willing to give in to political conformity, and which was, therefore, all the more rigid in its schematization and forceful [in the*

---

<sup>1</sup> *Il Movimento di Comunione e Liberazione: conversazioni con Robi Ronza* (1976; Milan: Jaca Book, 1986), 11-16, and 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Mondo Beat* was a mass movement organized in the 1960s to stage non-violent demonstrations on behalf of civil rights and environmental protection. It was popular in Italy and France and had a sizable following in Milan. Melchiorre Gerbino, “Mondo Beat: Storia documentata e illustrata del Movimento Mondo Beat e della nascita della Contestazione,” [http://www.melchiorre-mel-gerbino.com/MondoBeat/Mondo\\_Beat.htm](http://www.melchiorre-mel-gerbino.com/MondoBeat/Mondo_Beat.htm), accessed August 6, 2010.

*promotion] of its ideas. There was a lot of talk about the Resistance, and yet, without the least glimmer or capacity for the sacrifice that it had demanded.<sup>3</sup> The call to the Resistance was simply a ruse for appropriating or justifying the rhetoric of partisan politics, in the strictest sense of that term.*

*To the adoption of the most liberal aspects of American culture and the renewed struggle against fascism was added the ideal of freedom of conscience – also conceived rigidly [...] from which a corollary was made to be derived (very influential at the level of education) which said that youngsters could no longer be invited, first of all, to verify the cultural contents of tradition (of tradition, in general; not only its Christian component); rather, they were to experiment with all manner of expression and thought in order that they might arrive at truth in a documented and impartial manner. Such were the hopes of the proponents of this pedagogy, which was formed according to the liberal-enlightenment mould.*

*During this period, I was lecturing at the Seminary of Venegono: teaching dogmatic theology to seminarians, and Oriental theology in the Faculty [of Theology];<sup>4</sup> and I foresaw that I would very soon turn a new leaf, which, in fact, took place. It all began with a little episode, destined, nevertheless, to transform my life: I had just set out for a vacation on the Adriatic coast. I was on a train when, it so happened, I began to converse with a group of students whom I found frighteningly ignorant of the Church. And constrained – out of loyalty [to the truth?], and for my own sanctification – to attribute that ignorance to their disgust and indifference toward the Church itself, I decided there and then to dedicate myself to the reestablishment of the Christian presence in the student milieu.<sup>5</sup>*

*Thus I requested and obtained from my superiors permission to leave Venegono and to come to Milan; and there I was sent to teach religion in the classical lycée G. Berchet.<sup>6</sup> From the first days of my appointment to Berchet, my*

---

<sup>3</sup> The *Resistance* was a popular movement that formed with the *raison d'être* of protesting Fascism, which had entered Italy with Benito Mussolini's rise to power in 1922, and was influential in causing its collapse in 1943.

<sup>4</sup> The years spent at Venegono were from 1937 to 1954.

<sup>5</sup> From 1945 to 1954 Giussani taught theology at Venegono, specializing in Orthodox theology (especially of the Slavophiles), American Protestant theology, and epistemology. He left Venegono in 1954 and was soon assigned to the lycée Berchet in central Milan.

<sup>6</sup> Giovanni Berchet (1783-1851), originally named Riccardo Michelini, was an Italian poet and novelist. He was influential in the Italian Romantic movement and is remembered politically as a proponent of Italian nationalism.

*first intuition, born of that encounter in the train, unfortunately proved true. I interrogated a handful of students known for their involvement with Catholic Action or the Scouts, whom I used to encounter in the corridors or the stairwells between classes, and asked them explicitly: ‘Do you really believe in Christ?’ They looked at me with eyes askance. As far as I recall, not one ever responded “yes” with that spontaneity characteristic of the person who has within himself the true ground of faith. And another question I used to pose to everyone in those early years was: ‘In your opinion, are Christianity and the Church present in school, do they have incidence in school?’ The question was almost always met with stupor or a smirk.*

*All of this took place around the mid-1950s, when it was commonly held that the Church was still a stable presence in Italian society; and a stable presence, indeed, it was, but only because the past had not yet been thwarted by an attack – its advance everywhere evident – [whose soldiers were] forged in those furnaces of new men, i.e., the schools and universities. It became clear to me, at that time, that a tradition, or, generally, a human experience, could not challenge history, cannot subsist in the flux of time, if not according to that measure in which it strove to express itself and to transmit itself according to modalities with cultural dignity.*

*No one would deny that the Church’s presence, in those years, was still stable and grounded, thanks to its past; but its weight and consistency depended mainly on two factors: first, participation, en masse, in Catholic devotions, owed frequently to the force of inertia; and, second (paradoxical to the first), a strictly political [kind of] power, misused from the ecclesial point of view, above all. Indeed, everyone, be it the Church or those partisan organisations that were its political sleeve,<sup>7</sup> manifested complete unawareness of the importance of renewing cultural creativity, and hence of [addressing] the problem of education. All resolutions were geared to the goal of increasing enrolment in official Catholic associations. Life in those associations, apart from the occasional burst of enthusiasm, was levelled to the purest moralism: wherever they gathered, the vital complexity of the Christian experience was reduced to the dutiful observance of a few select precepts (and not even the Decalogue was invoked with the same level of determination).*

---

<sup>7</sup> Giussani is likely referring to *Azione Cattolica* (AC), a movement of lay Catholics whose purpose was to exert influence on society, and *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC), the Christian Democratic Party in Italy, founded in 1943 on the basis of Catholic social teaching.

\* \* \*

*In the same period, a process of radicalization lay siege to the secular sphere of culture, under the influence of the University of Pisa, to cite one example.<sup>8</sup> The attack expressed itself through an increasingly systematic intolerance and aggression toward every kind of Christian idea; and, above all, for every kind of Christian presence. My unambiguous opinion from the get-go was that lay scholars set out to capture the departmental chairs of greatest influence (e.g., history, Italian literature, philosophy) using them as a pulpit against the pulpits. Numerous professors in many schools used their chairs as anti-Christian pulpits and they set their sights on destroying the faith of their believing pupils. Almost always, they were individuals who had a preconceived notion of religious experience and treated religion with intolerance, completely contradicting that openness to ideas on which they prided themselves, seeking support from like-minded individuals. According to these teachers, anything that derived from the Church was a priori inhuman, and there was no point at all in drawing Christians into a conversation. [...] In 1954, it was already apparent that professors of this kind were forming groups in the key schools of Italy's most important cities (in Lombardy, in fact, the better part gathered at the lycées and state schools in Milan) in a manner that was not sporadic, but deliberate. The pseudo-democratic facade of the operation was sustained by equivocal statements on which the state's monopoly of public schools was founded. If those statements, in theory, fail to respect the individual's cultural identity, let alone that of the cohort – precisely because they pretend to view the world impartially from a limbo that stands 'over and above the scuffle' – in practice, they paradoxically drug the conscience of youngsters so that they are docile to the cultural manipulation effected either by groups or teachers. The anti-Catholic crusade waged by lay professors in the '50s went so far as to exclude parts of the Italian literary tradition in order to suppress a rich repository of Christian*

---

<sup>8</sup> Giussani may be referring to attacks launched against university students involved in CL (Comunione e Liberazione Universitari [CLU]) from 1972 to 1973 at the universities in regions of Italy where there were high percentages of communist supporters, such as in Tuscany (e.g. Università di Pisa) and Emilia-Romagna (Università di Bologna). See: Massimo Camisasca, *Comunione e Liberazione*, vol. 2 (Milan [Cinisello-Balsamo], 2003), 74-91.

*personalities. It is significant that Gioventù Studentesca would eventually come to be embroiled in this polemic against secularization.<sup>9</sup>*

*As the anti-Catholic crusade of the '50s waned (confirmed also by events), no one could ever have imagined that Marxism would take its place as the dominant culture of the intelligentsia, soon to become the curriculum of the modern 'clerics.' The whole thing seems even stranger considering the fact that those were the years of the Cold War and of the anti-Communist crusade. It seemed clear to me that attacking Marxist culture as the lone enemy would have meant, above all, getting at its roots. Marxist culture, in its opposition to religion and church, is none other than a theoretical and operative offshoot of the Enlightenment. Secondly, the opposition with which Marxism was met was of the kind that was deaf to its own claims: i.e., it precluded the possibility of a potentially useful confrontation. Meanwhile, that deafness was not only exhibited by Marxism's opponents: Marxist culture itself, in those years, was in no way disposed to the kind of dialogue to which it opened itself ably and fruitfully several years later.*

*Fascism, for its part, was razed and driven out from Italian society only "officially." In actual fact, it persisted as a style of thought far beyond the perimeter of the electorate and public diligence. Its continued presence passed through individuals who had made the better part of their careers under Fascist rule and who could still be found in the upper classes, schools, bureaucracy, and the judiciary. Even if Fascism did not emerge as an explicit cultural position, the mentality survived in select quarters: gaining strength, clothing itself in the garb of despotism, taking full advantage of prevailing laws. In other quarters, working its effects on youth – and precisely this quarter interested me most – Fascism manifested itself in the gathering call of a single-minded political agenda: the anti-communist crusade. I noticed among youth the diffusion of that pantheism influenced by Evola,<sup>10</sup> which is*

---

<sup>9</sup> Gioventù Studentesca (Student Youth) was the name given to the first group of students from *Azione Cattolica* who gathered around Giussani on a weekly basis to reflect openly on matters of life and faith.

<sup>10</sup> Giulio Evola (1898-1974), Italian philosopher and spiritualist associated with radical antiegalitarian, antiliberal, antidemocratic, and antipopular political systems. See: Franco Ferraresi, "The Radical Right in Postwar Italy" in *Politics & Society* 16 (1988): 71-119; here 84.

*ultimately a form of Vitalism.<sup>11</sup> Occasionally it was explicitly referenced to Evola, but more frequently it appeared unwittingly in the cultural matrix, anonymously introduced by certain teachers.*

*Political centrists, similarly gathered under the anti-Communist rallying cry, adopted a conservative logic. They played the conservatist card used banally to justify so many governmental activities.<sup>12</sup> The ruling class in those years was characterized by an absolute insensitivity to the cultural dimension. Core leadership, being far more than crypto-fascist, was guilty of cultural insensitivity. And it is precisely the absence of cultural dignity that leads to the decline of public service at all levels, precipitating the fall to various kinds of Fascism.*

\* \* \*

*With some notable exceptions, Christian educators – like the rest of the Catholic intelligentsia of that era – applied assiduously the principle of the substantial separation between religious and temporal spheres.<sup>13</sup> Following some abstract ideal of the state of nature, they prided themselves on teaching without proposing any world vision, and failed to communicate what they were (or, for that matter, what they were not). For this reason, they neither created nor encouraged a single stance that was cultural, or Christian, or respectful of Christianity. Be not*

---

<sup>11</sup> The doctrine that “life, and reality in so far as it is living, consists in movement and becoming, rather than in static being.” (M. J. Inwood, “Vitalism,” in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, edited by Ted Honderich [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005], 948).

<sup>12</sup> Conservatism is a political philosophy, interested in culture and identity, that seeks to preserve institutions and encourages steady evolution over radical change. While conservatism has many forms, there is a strong tradition of it in the United States. In Italy, the movement largely formed as a reaction to communism. See: Anthony O’Hear, “Conservatism,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, 165-167.

<sup>13</sup> Giussani is in line with the idea of uniting nature and grace, natural and supernatural, as proposed in Jacques Maritain’s (1882–1973) “integral humanism”: “[W]hat the world needs is a new humanism, a[n] ... integral humanism that would consider man in all his natural grandeur and weakness, in the entirety of his wounded being inhabited by God, in the full reality of nature, sin, and sainthood. Such a humanism would recognize all that is irrational in man, in order to tame it to reason, and all that is suprarational, in order to have reason vivified by it and to open man to the descent of the divine into him. Its main work would be to cause the Gospel leaven and inspiration to penetrate the secular structures of life—a work of sanctification of the temporal order.” (“Christian Humanism,” in *The Social and Political Philosophy of Jacques Maritain: Selected Readings*, edited by Joseph W. Evans and Leo R. Ward [Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1965], 155-169; here 164-165). Giussani, however, was also aware that some interpretations of Maritain’s idea were strongly dualistic, resulting in a strong separation of the two kingdoms, Christ’s and Caesar’s, through which the social doctrine of the Church could even be applied as a ruse for sometimes violent political activism. Giussani, therefore, tended to distance himself from Maritain’s positions. See Giussani, *MCL*, 112.



*surprised that all this took place in the very city of Milan, at the main campus of l'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, even if that university is the largest cultural institution in Italy for Catholics. In those years, Sacro Cuore (going totally against its raison d'être), while enjoying increased cultural prominence, successfully upheld and spread that principle of separation between the temporal and the religious which, in due course, nearly overshadowed the presence of Catholicism in Italy. I was, therefore, perplexed by the simultaneous blossoming of Catholic associations. With their apparent power and ability to mobilize the masses, I asked why these organizations failed to have any impact in places where the better part of the population spent their days: factories, offices, schools; why the faith of students born into Catholic families, and connected to parishes, was declining; why faith-education was being formalized in schools when it no longer had the ability to understand how faith and Christian life could offer theoretical and existential answers to problems right in the schooling years as students travelled the path to full maturity. High schools and universities, I believe, are free and open environments – which is well and good – where youngsters begin to take responsibility for themselves and to complete for themselves the verification of texts and criteria transmitted up until that point through their families. In this [academic] environment, more than in any other, it is crucially important that faith prove itself more capable than any other formula of answering the new demands that press on the life of a maturing youngster. Such an answer can't but reject the theses on which objections to the Christian experience are founded. The one thing more important than anything else is that faith becomes a mentality: it is a mentality that creates, giving new form to things. For those formed in Catholic associations, faith was hardly ever a Christian mentality.*

\* \* \*

*The initiative [of Communion and Liberation (CL)] was born in response to this crisis and to the absence of Christians in the most vital and concrete spheres of ordinary life. Ours was a rebuttal (the best within our means) of a situation which saw Christians politely excusing themselves from public life, culture, popular concern, all amidst encouragements, applause, and the cordial consensus of political*

and cultural forces which positioned themselves to replace them in the unfolding of our national life. The intervention took the form of a structure, the stamp of a pre-existing organization: Gioventù Studentesca (GS). This name originated from the student branch of Gioventù Femminile dell'Azione Cattolica (GF), while the corresponding branch of male students went by other appellations, until they decided on Movimento Studenti di Azione Cattolica (AC). [...] One of Azione Cattolica's mandates involved the specialized care [of souls] according to gender. [...] The fracturing of Azione Cattolica in all of its various branches had a sexophobic element, the inevitable fruit of moral schematism. [...] GS and the Movimento Studenti [...] were created, therefore, for young students who were members of Azione Cattolica. Their eventuality, however, did not identify with an urgent missionary mandate, one of the fundamental facets of the Christian fact. Suffice it to say that in those years a letter from the Diocesan Youth Office was published in which parishes were asked to take up the care of university students; the presence of ecclesial life in the spheres of university life was deemed a compromise! Therefore, the missionary element was completely forgotten as [the letter] focussed on protecting the fruits of an Oratory education.<sup>14</sup> I began by saying that CL took its inspiration from these two organizations, which merged under the name Gioventù Studentesca; but the criteria that inspired CL were very different.

I would say that CL is influenced by two great schools of Christian thought [i.e., St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas]. The existential and affective aspects that are dominant in the Augustinian vision, used to be, and still are expressed in rational exigencies – viz., understanding and coherence – which belong to the Thomistic method. But if I were to give a univocal account of their influence, I'd say the Movement is Thomist (I said Thomist and not Neo-Thomist). I refer to St. Thomas's definition of truth [adaequatio rei et intellectum], which, as I mentioned, constitutes one of the pillars on which our experience is founded; it is purely existentialist: thus, it already contains that which might be specifically recovered from Augustine. Beyond these great classics, I'd say that I've drawn from Möhler's influence in ecclesiology, and above all from the thought of Newman: they were my favourite authors in the first years of theology. Of the more modern influences, I

---

<sup>14</sup> In this context, the term "oratory" refers generally to parish youth groups.

would cite, above all, Przywara, Guardini, and de Lubac. Then I'd add the literature of the contemporary great French converts: Péguy, Claudel, Bernanos; including also the pure existentialist thought of Gabriel Marcel. Of the great Italian precursors to the Conciliar movement [...] we read Don Milani [...]; his book *Lettera ad una professoressa*,<sup>15</sup> and the position of the Movement regarding education was generally influenced by all his works in education.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Lorenzo Milani (1923-1967), Italian priest, author, and educator, known especially for his solicitude for poor students, and highly controversial in the Catholic Church of Italy on account of apparently polemical writings against the establishment. He advocated a method of education that taught poor students to practice critical evaluation of political, economic, and social legislation, and to use education, including the development of talents and skills, to make a difference in society. The title of his most famous book, *L'obbedienza non è più una virtù* (Obedience is no longer a virtue), no matter what its thesis may have been, was highly inflammatory at the time of its publication in 1965 – particularly from the anti-modernist perspective of the Roman Curia. Italy, in those years, was torn by fascist, democratic, and communist factions vying for power, and demonstrations by the agrarian and industrial classes were seen within the Church as highly subversive of tradition and social organization. Cf. *L'obbedienza non è più una virtù. Documenti del processo di Don Milani* (Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1965).

<sup>16</sup> See Milani, *Lettera a una professoressa* (Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1967).

# Bibliography and Sources

## WORKS BY LUIGI GIUSSANI

1956

“Risposte cristiane ai problemi dei giovani. Gioventù Italiana di Azione Cattolica.” Milan: Presidenza Deocesana Milanese, 1955. Reprint Fonte Seniores, 1956; in *Quaderni* 16; *Litterae Communionis* 2; in *Realtà e giovinezza. La sfida*. Turin: SEI, 1996: 125-147. Citations are to the 1996 edition.

1959

“G.S. Riflessioni sopra un'esperienza.” Milan: Gioventù Studentesca, 1959. Reprint in *Il cammino al vero è un'esperienza*. Torino: SEI, 1995: 3-43. Citations are to the 1995 edition.

1960

“Come educare al senso della Chiesa.” *Quaderni de l'Azione Giovanile*. 7-8. Suppl. to *L'Azione Giovanile* 52 (1960): 14-16. Reprint, Milan: Marietti, 1997. Citations to the 1997 edition, 6-10.

“Per una educazione allo spirito cattolico.” Suppl. to *La Missione* 13.27 (1960): 59-64. Reprint, Milan: Marietti, 1997. Citations from the Marietti edition, 11-15.

“Cristianesimo aperto.” *Fede e Civiltà* 58.3 (1960): 112-120. Reprint, Milan: Marietti, 1997. Citations from the Marietti edition, 54-68.

“Valore educativo della scuola libera.” *Vita e Pensiero* 43 (1960): 401-408. Reprinted as “La libertà della scuola.” *Vita e Pensiero* (1962): 53-60; *Vita e Pensiero 1914-1964* (1966): 692-701; Milan: Marietti, 1997. Citations to the 1997 edition, 28-38.

1961

“Crisi e possibilità della Gioventù Studentesca.” Lecutre: “La gioventù attuale e i problemi della spiritualità.” *XI Settimana di spiritualità. L'Università Cattolica del S. Cuore, Milano*. First edition: *Vita e Pensiero*, Milan, 1961; second edition: *Realtà e Giovinezza, La sfida*. Turin: SEI, 1996: 148-157. Citations are to the 1996 edition.

1966

“Il valore di alcune parole che segnano il cammino cristiano.” In *L'Osservatore Romano*. April 6, 1966.

1969

*Teologia protestante americana*. Venegono: La scuola cattolica, 1969. Reprinted with introduction by Elisa Buzzi as *Grandi linee della teologia protestante Americana*. Milan: JacaBook, 1989. Reprinted again with other essays by Giussani

as *Teologia Protestante Americana. Profilo Storico*. Ed. Eliza Buzi. Milan: Marietti, 2003.

*Reinhold Neibuhr*. Milan: JacaBook, 1969.

1971

*L'impegno del cristiano nel mondo*. In collaboration with H.U. Von Balthasar. Milan: JacaBook, 1971.

*Scuola Quaderni: Appunti*, Cesenatico, October 2, 1971.

"Un seminario culturale: genesi, realizzazione, spunti." *Litterae Communionis* 13 (1971): 4-11.

1977

*Tracce d'esperienza cristiana*. Milan: Jaca Book, 1977. Reprint, Milan, Jaca Book, 1991.

"C.L. è un movimento di educazione ecclesiale." *Litterae Communionis* (1977): 2-4.

1979

*Da quale vita nasce Comunione e Liberazione*. Interview by G. Sacro. *Il Sabato* (1979) 20.

1980

*Moralità: memoria e desiderio*. Milan: Jaca Book, 1980. Translated by K. D. Whitehead as *Morality: Memory and Desire* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986). Reprinted in *Alia ricerca del volto umano*. Milan: Rizzoli, 1995, 127-237. Citations to the Rizzoli edition.

"Comunione e Liberazione. Ieri e oggi. Intervista a don Luigi Giussani." In *Il Corriere Apuano*, April 20, 1980.

1986

*Il Movimento di Comunione e Liberazione: conversazioni con Robi Ronza*. 1976; Milan: Jaca Book, 1986.

1987

"La famiglia luogo di educazione all'appartenenza." *Litterae Communionis* (1987): 1619.

1993

*L'avvenimento cristiano: Uomo, Chiesa, Mondo*. 1993; Milan: Rizzoli, 2003.

"Un avvenimento di vita cioè una storia." Editorial. *Il Sabato*. Rome, 1993

"Questa cara gioia sopra la quale ogni virtù si fonda." *Esercizi Spirituali della Fraternità di Comunione e Liberazione. Appunti dalle meditazioni*. Rimini 2-4 April 1993. Suppl. *Litterae Communionis*, 6 (1993): 1-80.

1994

*Il senso di Dio e l'uomo moderno. La «questione umana» e la novità del Cristianesimo.* Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1994.

*Si può vivere così? Uno strano approccio all'esistenza cristiana.* Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1994.

1995

*Alla ricerca del volto umano.* Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1995.

*«Tu» (o del amicizia). Quasi TISCHREDEN, vol 1.* Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1995.

*The Religious Sense.* Translated by John Zucchi. Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's University Press. Originally published as *Il senso religioso*. Gioventù Italiana di Azione Cattolica. Presidenza Diocesana Milanese. Milan: Fontes Seniores, 1957. Revised as *Il Senso Religioso*. Volume 1. *PerCorso*. Milan: Jaca Book, 1986; reprint, Milan: Rizzoli, 1995, 1997. Italian citations are from the 1997 Rizzoli edition. English citations are from the McGill-Queen's edition.

*Il rischio educativo. Come creazione di personalità.* Turin: SEI, 1995. Translated by Rosanna M. Giammanco Frangia as *The Risk of Education: Discovering our Ultimate Destiny* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995).

*Il tempo e il tempio.* Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1995.

1996

*Le mie letture.* Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 1996.

1997

*Lettere di fede e di amicizia ad Angelo Majo.* Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo, 1997.

*Porta la speranza: primi scritti.* Milan: Marietti, 1997.

1998

*At the Origins of the Christian Claim.* Translated by Viviane Hewitt. Montreal/Kingston: McGill Queen's University Press, 1998. Originally Published as *Alle Origini dell Pretesa Cristiana*. Volume 2. *PerCorso*. (Milan: Jaca Book 1988).

"Religious Awareness in Modern Man." *Communio: International Catholic Review* 25 (1998): 104-140.

1999

*L'uomo e il suo destino. In camino.* Genova: Marietti, 1999.

2000

*L'io, il potere, e le opere: Contributi da un'esperienza.* Genova: Marietti, 2000.

2001

*Affezione e dimora.* Quasi TISCHREDEN. Vol. 5. Milan: Rizzoli, 2001.

*Why the Church?* Translated by Viviane Hewitt. Montreal/Kingston: McGill/Queen's University Press, 2001. Originally published as *Perché la Chiesa. La pretesa permane.* Volume 3. *PerCorso.* Milan: Jaca Book, 1990; and *Perché la Chiesa. Parte seconda: Il segno efficace del divinno nella storia.* Volume. 3. *PerCorso.* Milan: Jaca Book, 1992.

2007

*All'origine della pretesa cristiana.* Milan: RCS Libri S.p.A., 2001.

*L'itinerario della fede.* Milan: Rizzoli, 2007.

2010

*L'io rinasce in un incontro (1986-1987).* Milan: Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli, 2010.

#### SOURCES FROM/ABOUT VENEGONO SEMINARY

- Colombo, Carlo. "La filosofia religiosa di Maurizio Blondel." In *La Scuola Cattolica* 62.4 (August 1934): 401-411.
- , "Intorno alla filosofia cristiana." In *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica.* 28.6 (November 1936): 510-517.
- , "Il problema della fede." In *La Scuola Cattolica* 74 (1946): 292-313.
- , "La metodologia teologica dal 1900-1950." In *La Scuola Cattolica* (1952): 453-479.
- , "Il cattolicesimo è la filosofia di S. Tommaso." In *Scritti teologici.* Varese: Tipografia Arcivescovile dell'Addolorata 1966.
- , "A proposito dei disordini all'Università Cattolica." In *Rivista Diocesana Milanese* 57.4 (April 1968): 256-257.
- , "Lettera al sig. Nello Casalini studente dell'Università Cattolica." In *Rivista Diocesana Milanese* 57.7 (July 1968): 429-431.
- , *Acta synodalia Concilii oecumenici Vaticani II.* 2nd ed. 1962-1965. Vol. 3, pt. 2, 554-557. Roma : Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970-1999.
- Colombo, Giovanni. "La letteratura come sussidio alla catechesi." In *La Scuola Cattolica* LXI (1933): 461-483.
- , "Mons. Carlo Figini: un maestro che seppe ascoltare (Dai ricordi di un alunno)" from *Miscellanea Carlo Figini* in *La Scuola Cattolica.* Varese: Venegono Inferiore, 1964.
- Corti, Gaetano. *Le basi razionali della fede. Esistenza di Dio: Teoria*

- della rivelazione*. Vol. 1. Varese: Tipografia Arcivescovale dell'Addolorata, 1953.
- Istituto di Studi per la Transizione (ISTRA). *Annuario Teologico 1984*. Milan: Istra-Edit, 1984.
- Montini, G. B. *Discorsi di S. E. il Cardinale Arcivescovo G. B. Montini agli uomini di Azione Cattolica*. Edited by Centro Diocesano Uomini di A. C. Milan.
- Rimoldi, Antonio. "Il cardinale Aldfredo Ildefonso Schuster: avvio allo studio." In *Archivio Ambrosiano* 38 (1979).

#### GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Nicholas. "Reparative Reasoning." In *Modern Theology* 24:3 (July 2008): 447-457.
- Aertsen, Jan A. *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas*. New York : E.J. Brill, 1996.
- Allison, Henry E. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum et Religionem*. Translated by John Procter, O.P. as An Apology for the Religious Orders (London: Sands & Co., 1902).
- , *Ex Thomae Aquinatis quaestionibus disputatis de veritate*. Edited by Paulus Wilpert. Ratisbon: J. Habbel, 1958.
- , *Expositio super librum Boethii de Trinitate*. Edited by Bruno Decker. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1955.
- , *'De malo' of Thomas Aquinas*. Translated by Richard Regan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- , *Saint Thomas Aquinas: Summa Theologica*. Translated by The Fathers of the English Dominican Province. 3 vols. New York: Benzinger Bros., 1948.
- , *Scriptum super libros sententiarum*. Vols. 3-4. Edited by M. F. Moss. Paris: Lethielleux, 1933.
- , *Scriptum super sententiis*. Charles H. Lohr. Amersham, Bucks.: Avebury Pub. Co., 1980.
- , *Sententia Libri Ethicorum. Textus leonini aequiparatus, ex plagulis de prelo emendatis, ed. Leoninae t. XLVII (1969)*. Edited by Fratrum praedicatorum. Rome: Ad Sanctae Sabinae, 1969.
- , *Summa Contra Gentiles. Editio Leonina Manualis*. Rome: Editrice Laziale, 1934.
- , *Summa Theologiae*. Volume 34: Charity. Translated by R. J. Batten. London and New York: Blackfriars, 1975.
- , *Thomae Aquinatis Summa Theologica*. Edited by Billuart De Rubeis. Turin: Marietti, 1927.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Le origini del totalitarismo*. Milan: Edizioni Comunità, 1996.
- Aristotle. *De Anima*. Translated by R. D. Hicks. Amsterdam: A. M. Hakkert, 1965.
- , *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Christopher Rowe with



- introduction and commentary by Sarah Brodie. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- . *Metaphysics*. Edited and translated by John Warrington. London: Dent, 1966.
- . *Topics. Books I and VIII, with excerpts from related texts*. Translated by Robin Smith. New York : Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Augustine. *The City of God Against the Pagans*. Translated and edited by R. W. Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. First published in 1998 by Cambridge University Press.
- . *Confessions*. Translated by Edward Pusey. London: J.M. Dent; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1907.
- . *Confessions*. Translated by Henry Chadwick. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- . *On Christian Doctrine*. Translated by R. W. Robertson, Jr. New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1958.
- Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. Volume I. *Seeing the Form*. Translated by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986.
- . *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*. Volume III. *Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles*. Translated by Andrew Louth, John Saward, Martin Simon, and Rowan Williams. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, and San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986.
- . *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*. Translated by Andrée Emery. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986.
- . *Theo-Logic I: Truth of the World*. Translated by Adrian J. Walker. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985.
- Benedict XVI. *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik. Neue Versuche zur Ekklesiologie*. Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1987.
- . *Dio salvi la ragione*. Siena: Cantagalli, 2007.
- Bergoglio, Jorge, Mario. "The Man." In *A Generative Thought: Introduction to the Works of Luigi Giussani*, edited by Elisa Buzzzi, 79-83. Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. Lecture given during the presentation of the Spanish edition of *Il senso religioso (El sentido religioso)*. Buenos Aires and Madrid: Editorial Sudamericana – Ediciones Encuentro 1998), auditorium of Banco Rio, Buenos Aires, 16 October 1998. Published in *Litterae Communionis – Tracce* 4 (1999).
- Bergson, Henri. *Saggi sui dati immediati della conoscenza*. Turin: Borringhieri, 1964.
- Berlin, Isaiah. *Political Ideas in the Romantic Age: Their Rise and Influence on Modern Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Bernardi, Peter J. *Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism and Action Française: The Clash over the Church's Role in Society during the Modernism Era*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009.
- Bernasconi, Robert, and Simon Critchley, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Lévinas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Bertoldi, Francesco, G. Zaffaroni, and M. Frascini. "La Scuola di Venegono (1935-1955)." *Annuario*. Milan: ISTR, 1985.

- , "de Lubac e la teologia ambrosiana." In *de Lubac e la cultura cattolica italiana*. [http://www.culturanuova.net/accademia/delubac-in-italia.php]. Accessed May 4, 2008.
- Biggar, Nigel. "Forgiving Enemies in Ireland." In *Journal of Religious Ethics* 36. 4 (2008): 559-579.
- Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Pauls Knight. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986.
- Blondel, Maurice. *Action (1893). Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*. Translated by Olivia Blanchette. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003.
- , "Pour la philosophie intégrale." In *Revue néo-scholastique de philosophie* 37 (1934): 49-64.
- , *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church*. Translated by Theodore G. Tappert, et al. Philadelphia, 1959.
- Bordeyne, Phillippe. *L'homme et son angoisse: La théologie morale de «Gaudium et Spes»*. Paris: Éditions Cerf, 2004.
- Brague, Remi. "Christianity: A Fact in History." In *A Generative Thought: Introduction to the Works of Luigi Giussani*. Edited by Elisa Buzzi. Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.
- Broadie, Sarah. *Ethics with Aristotle*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- Buzzi, Elisa. *A Generative Thought: An Introduction to the Works of Luigi Giussani*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.
- Camisasca, Massimo. *Comunione e Liberazione*. 3 vols. Protagonisti Series. Milan (Cinisello-Balsamo): Edizioni San Paolo, 2006.
- , *Don Giussani: la sua esperienza dell'uomo di Dio*. Milan (Cinisello-Balsamo): Edizioni San Paolo, 2009.
- Carrel, Alexis. *Voyage to Lourdes*. New York: Harper & Row, 1939.
- Carrón, Julián. "The permanence of Christian experience in the Acts of the Apostles." *Communio: International Catholic Review* 23.2 (1996): 207-224.
- , Wael Farouq, Lorenzo Ornachi. "The Broadening of Reason." Ed. Alessandro Gamba. Suppl. to *Traces* 1 (2007): 7-39.
- Cassidy, Eoin. *The Common Good in and Unequal World: Reflections on the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2007.
- Civardi, Luigi. *Manuale di Azione Cattolica*, 12<sup>th</sup> Italian ed. Pavia: Tipo-Libreria Vescovile, 1952.
- Chenu, Marie-Domenique. *Une École de théologie: Le Saulchoir*. Paris: Etolles, 1937.
- , "Une constitution pastorale de l'Église" in *Documentation hollandaise du Concile*, no. 205 (1965).
- Clarke, Norris W. *Person and Being*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1993.
- , *The Philosophical Approach to God: A Neo-Thomist Perspective*. Edited by William E. Ray. Winston-Salem, N.C. : Wake Forest University, 1979.
- , *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics*. Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001.

- Cocking, D. and Kennett, J. "Friendship and the self." In *Ethics* 108 (1998), 502–527..
- Collingwood, R. G. *An Autobiography*. Reprinted with introduction and notes by Stephen Toulmin. 1939; Oxford: Clarendon, 2002.
- Collins, James. *The Mind of Kierkegaard*. Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953
- Colleran, J. M. "Destiny, Supernatural." In *The New Catholic Encyclopaedia* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.. Vol. 3. New York: Gale Publishing Inc., 2002.
- Colombo, Carlo. *Acta synodalia Concilii oecumenici Vaticani II*, vol. 3, part 2, 554-557.
- The Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*. Washington DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004.
- Corrington, Robert S. "Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture by Peter Ochs." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. 67.3 (Sept. 1999): 698-700.
- Dahlstrom, Daniel. "The Phenomenological Reformation in Heidegger's Early Augustine Lectures." In *The Influences of Augustine on Heidegger: The Emergence of an Augustinian Phenomenology*. Edited by Craig de Paulo. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2006.
- Daly, Gabriel. "Theological and philosophical Modernism." In *Catholicism Contending with Modernity*. Edited by Darrell Jodock, 88-112. Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Dawson, Christopher. *Religion and Culture*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1948.
- de Lubac, Henri. *Surnaturel: études historiques*. Paris : Aubier, 1946.
- Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edited by Thomas Bottomore, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband. 1983; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991.
- Di Martino, Carmine. "La convivenza tra culture." In *I diritti in azione: universalità e pluralismo dei diritti fondamentali nelle Corti europee*. Edited by Marta Cartabia. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2007.
- Di Pede, Robert. "Luigi Giussani on the Notion of Christian Friendship." *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*. 14.1 (2011): 91-121.
- Directory of International Associations of the Faithful (DIAF)*. Pontifical Council for the Laity. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006. Numerous editions.
- Dostoevsky, Fyodor. *Crime and Punishment*. Translated with notes by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. New York: Vintage Books, 1993.
- , *The Brothers Karamazov*. Translated with notes by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky. London: Vintage Books, 2004.
- Ebani, Nadia. *Giacomo Leopardi. I Primi Scritti*. Guanda: Biblioteca di scrittori Italiani, 2005 [<http://www.italialibri.net/opere/primipoemetti.html>]. Accessed May 22, 2008.
- Eliot, Thomas Stearns. *T.S. Eliot: The Collected Poems: 1909-1962*. 1963, New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Company, 1991.
- , *Cori da "La Rocca."* Translated by Roberto Sanesi from the English "Chorus VII" in *Choruses from the Rock*. Milan: BUR, 1994.
- The Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*. Edited by Paul Edwards. New York: The Free Press, division of Macmillan Co., 1967.
- Fabro, Cornelio. *Introduzione all'ateismo moderno*. Translated by Arthur

- Gibson as *God in Exile: Modern Atheism*. New York: Newman Press, 1968.
- Farouq, Wael. "The Religious Sense and Arab Reason." In *Broadening Reason*. Edited by Alessandro Gamba. Suppl. to *Litterae Communis* – Trace 1 (2007): 11-20.
- Ferreira, M. Jamie. *Love's Grateful Striving: A Commentary on Kierkegaard's Works of Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Fitzer, Joseph. *Moehler and Bauer in Controversy, 1832-38: Romantic-Idealist Assessment of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation in AAR Studies in Religion*. No. 7. Tellahassee: American Academy of Religion, 1974.
- Fazzini, Lorenzo. "Spaemann: Chi si sbarazza di Dio nega la verità di questo Istante." In *Tracce: Rivista internazionale di Comunione e Liberazione* 9 (October 2009): 11-12.
- Fogarty, Michael P. *Christian Democracy in Western Europe 1820-1953*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1957.
- Formigoni, Guido and Giorgio Vecchio. *L'Azione Cattolica nella Milano del Novecento*. Milan: Rusconi Libri S.p.A., 1989.
- Frankfurt, Harry. "Freedom of Will and the Concept of Person." In *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971): 5-20.
- Fritz Cates, Diana. *Aquinas on the Emotions: A Religious-Ethical Inquiry*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2009.
- Gaudium et Spes*. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Vatican City, December 7 1965. In *The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Vol. 1. Edited by Austin Flannery. 1975; New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1996.
- Garrigou-Lagrange, Réginald. *La synthèse thomiste*. Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1946.
- , "Letter to Maurice Blondel." In *Angelicum* 24 (1947): 212-213.
- Gerbino, Melchiorre. *Mondo Beat: Storia documentata e illustrata del Movimento Mondo Beat e della nascita della Contestazione* [[http://www.melchiorre-mel-gerbino.com/MondoBeat/Mondo\\_Beat.htm](http://www.melchiorre-mel-gerbino.com/MondoBeat/Mondo_Beat.htm)]. Accessed August 6, 2010.
- Ginborg, Paul. "Economic Miracle: Rural Exodus and Social Transformation 1958-63." In *A History of Contemporary Italy 1943-1980*. London: Penguin, 1980.
- Gilson, Etienne. *The Elements of Christian Philosophy*. 1960; New York: Mentor Omega, 1963.
- Girard, René. *The Scapegoat*. Translated by Yvonne Freccerò. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.
- Grattan-Flood, William. "St. Machutus." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 9. New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910. [<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09503a.htm>]. Accessed June 6, 2009.
- Guardini, Romano. *The End of the Modern World*. Translated by Elinor C. Briefs and Henry Regnery. 1956, 1961; Wilmington: ISI Books, 1998. Originally published as *Ende der Neuzeit*, 1950. Italian edition "Il potere" in *La fine dell'epoca moderna*. Brescia, 1993.
- , *Letters from Lake Como: Exploration in Technology and the Human*

- Race*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 1981; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991. Originally published as *Die Technik und der Mensch. Briefe vom Comer See*. Mainz: 1927. Italian edition *Lettere dal lago di Como: la tecnica e l'uomo*. Various editions.
- Haldane, John. "Analytical Thomism: A Brief Introduction." In *The Monist* 80.4 (October 1997): 485-486.
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. Translated by T. M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- , *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Translated by A.V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Heidegger, Martin. "Augustinus und der Neuplatonismus." In *Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens*. Edited by Matthias Jung, et al. Frankfurt and Main: Klostermann, 1995.
- , *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row, 1962.
- , "Building Dwelling Thinking." In *Basic Writings*. Edited and translated by David Farrell Krell. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
- , *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Translated by Richard Taft. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- , "The Question Concerning Technology." In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. Edited and translated by William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.
- I movimenti nella chiesa negli anni '80*. Atti del I Convegno Internazionale. September 23-27, 1981. Edited by M. Camisasca and M. Vitali. Milan: Jaca Book, 1982.
- I movimenti nella chiesa*. Atti del II Colloquio internazionale su «Vocazione e missione dei laici nella Chiesa di oggi.» Rocca di Papa, February 28-March 4, 1987. Milan: Nuovo Mondo, 1987, 101-103.
- "In memoriam: Le Père Pedro Descoqs." In *Archives de philosophie* 18 (1949): 130-31.
- International associations of the faithful : directory* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2006).
- Jodock, Darrell. *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Theology and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- John Paul II. *Dives in misericordia*. Encyclical on the Mercy of God. Vatican City, 1980. Numerous editions.
- , *Redemptoris Missio*. On the permanent validity of the Church's missionary mandate. Vatican City, 1990. Numerous editions.
- , *Laborem Exercens*. Encyclical on Human Work on the Ninetieth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. Vatican City, 1981. Numerous editions.
- , *Centessimus Annus*. Encyclical on the Hundredth Anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*. Vatican City, 1991. Numerous editions.
- , "Al Reverendo Monsignore Luigi Giussani, Fondatore del Movimento Comunione e Liberazione." In *Il Movimento di Comunione e Liberazione*. Cinisello Balsamo (Milan): Edizioni San Paolo, 2002.
- Kant, Emmanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Translated by Thomas

- Kingsmill Abbott. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1898.
- , *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. Translated by Richard Taft. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Kasper, Walter. *The Christian Understanding of Freedom and the History of Freedom in the Modern Era: The Meeting and Confrontation Between Christianity and the Modern Era in a Postmodern Situation*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1988.
- Kisiel, Theodore. *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*. Berkley: University of California Press, 1993.
- Klauder, Francis J. "Connatural Knowledge." In *A Philosophy Rooted in Love: The Dominant Themes in the Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas*. New York: University Press of America, 1994.
- Knasas, John F. X. "Whither the Neo-Thomist Revival?" In *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 3.4 (2000): 121–49.
- Kerr, Fergus. *Theology After Wittgenstein*. London: SPCK, 1997.
- , "Charity as Friendship." In *Language, Meaning and God: Essays in Honour of Herbert McCabe OP*. Ed. Brian Davies. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1987.
- , *After Aquinas: Versions of Thomism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002.
- , *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.
- Kierkegaard, Søren. *Fear and Trembling*. Translated by Walter Lowrie. New York: Doubleday, 1954.
- , *The Sickness Unto Death*. Translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.
- , *Works of love : some Christian reflections in the form of discourses*. Translated by. Howard V. and Edna H. Hong. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964.
- Klauder, Francis. *A Philosophy Rooted in Love: The Dominant Themes in the Perennial Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Lanham, New York, London: University of America Press, 1994.
- Klubertanz, George. "St. Thomas' Treatment of the Axiom, *Omne agens agit propter finem*." In *An Etienne Gilson Tribute*. Edited by C. O'Neill. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1959.
- Kertzer, David I. *Comrades and Christians: religion and political struggle in Communist Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- Knowles, David. *The Religious Orders in England*. Vol. 3. *The Tudor Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959.
- Lash, Nicholas. *Voices of Authority*. London: Sheed and Ward, 1976.
- , *Newman on Development: In Search for an Explanation in History*. London : Sheed and Ward; 1975.
- Leo XIII. *Aeterni Patris*. Encyclical on the Restoration of Christian Philosophy. Vatican City, 1879. Numerous editions.
- Leonard, Ellen M. *George Tyrrell and the Catholic Tradition*. London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1982.
- Leopardi, Giacomo. *Thoughts*. Translated by J.G. Nichols. London: Hesperus Press Limited, 2002.



- , *Selected Poems of Giacomo Leopardi*. Translated by Thomas G. Bergin and Anne Paolucci. Smyrna: Griffon House Publications, 2003.
- Lévinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
- , *Collected Philosophical Papers*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1987.
- , *Otherwise than Being or Beyond*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998.
- Leo XIII. *Aeterni Patris*. Encyclical on the restoration of Christian Philosophy. Vatican City, 1849. Numerous editions.
- Leopardi, Giacomo. *Canti*. Edited by Niccolò Gallo e Cesare Garboli. 1962; Turin Einaudi editore s. p. a., 1993.
- Lewis, C. S. *The Four Loves*. 1960; London: HarperCollins, 1998.
- Lindbeck, George A. "Discovering Thomas: The Classic Statement of Christian Theism." *Una Sancta* 24 (1967).
- , *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*. London: SPCK, 1984.
- Lippitt, John. "Cracking the Mirror: on Kierkegaard's concerns about friendship." In *International Journal of the Philosophy of Religion* 61 (2007): 131–150.
- Lonergan, Bernard. *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*. Edited by J. Patout Burns. New York: Herder and Herder, 1971.
- , *Method in Theology*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972.
- Luminarium: Encyclopedia Project*, "The First Act of Succession, 1534" [<http://www.luminarium.org/encyclopedia/firstactofsuccession.htm>]. Accessed August 10, 2010.
- Luther, Martin. *Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Tischreden. 6 vols. Weimar: Verlag Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger.
- MacDowell, John. *Mind and World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994.
- MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. 1984; Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2003.
- , *Dopo la virtù. Saggio di teoria morale*. Translated by M. D'Avenia from the original *After Virtue, A Study in Moral Theology*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 1993.
- , *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. Chicago and La Salle: Open Court Publishers, 1999.
- Maggiolini, Alessandro. "Magisterial teaching on experience in the twentieth century: From the Modernist crisis to the Second Vatican Council." In *Communio: International Catholic Review* 23.2 (1996): 225–243.
- Maritain, Jacques. *Alla ricerca di Dio*. Rome: Edizioni Paoline, 1956.
- , *Integral Humanism: Temporal and Spiritual Problems of a New Christendom*. Translated by Otto Bird, Joseph Evans, and Richard O'Sullivan. 1936; Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1996.
- Martinez, German. *Signs of Freedom: Theology of the Christian Sacraments*. New York: Paulist Press, 2003.

- Maurer, Armand. *About Beauty: A Thomistic Interpretation*. Houston, TX: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1983.
- McCool, Gerald. *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: the Seabury Press, 1977.
- , *The Neo-Thomists*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press & Association of Jesuit University Presses, 1994.
- , *Nineteenth-Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1977.
- McLellan, David. "Marxism" in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. Second edition. Edited by Ted Honderich. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- McNerney, John. *John Paul II: Poet and Philosopher*. London; New York: Burns and Oates, 2004.
- Meissner, W. W. *Life and Faith: Psychological Perspectives on Religious Experience*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1987.
- Merrigan, Terrence. "Revelation." In *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*. Edited by Ian Kerr and Terrence Merrigan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Migne, J.-P., ed. *Patrologia Latina* (Paris: Migne, 1844-65), 221 vols.
- Milani, Lorenzo. *L'obbedienza non è più una virtù. Documenti del processo di Don Milani*. Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1965.
- , *Lettera a una professoressa*. Florence: Libreria Editrice Fiorentina, 1967.
- Miller, Jerome A. *The Way of Suffering: A Geography of Crisis*. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1988..
- Misner, Paul. "Catholic Anti-Modernism: The Ecclesial Setting." In *Catholicism Contending with Modernity*. Edited by Darrell Jodock. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Montini, Giovanni Battista. "Sul senso religioso: lettera pastorale all'archidiocesi Ambrosiana per la S. quaresima dell'anno del Signore MCMLVII." Milan: Scuola Tipografica Pont. Arcivescovile S. Giuseppe, 1958.
- Mounier, Emmanuel. *Personalism*. London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1952.
- Murdoch, Iris. *Existentialists and Mystics*. 1950; New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1999.
- , *Sovereignty of the Good*. 1970; London, New York: Routledge Ltd., 2002.
- , *Metaphysics as a Guide to Morals*. 1992; London: Vintage Random House, 2003.
- Nédoncelle, Maurice. « L'influence de Newman sur 'Les Yeux de la Foi' de Rousselot » in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses de l'Université de Strasbourg* 27 (1958): 197-213.
- Newman, John Henry. *An essay on the development of Christian doctrine*. Edited with an introduction by J. M. Cameron. 1845; Harmondsworth, Middlesex : Penguin Books, 1974.
- , *An Essay in Aid of A Grammar of Assent*. 1870; Notre Dame and London, 1979.
- , *Parochial and Plain Sermons*. Vol. 2. London; Oxford; Cambridge:



- Rivingtons, 1868.
- , *Conscience and papacy: letter to the Duke of Norfolk*. Edited with an introduction and notes by Stanley L. Jaki. Pinckney, Mich.: Real View Books, 2002.
- Nichols, Aiden. "Balthasar's Aims in the 'Theological Aesthetics.'" In *Glory, grace, and culture: the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*. Edited by Ed Block. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005.
- Norris, Thomas J. "Faith." In *The Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman*. Edited by Ian Kerr and Terrence Merrigan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- O'Connor, John. "Mystery Incarnate." In *A Generative Thought: Introduction to the Works of Luigi Giussani*. Edited by Elisa Buzzi. Montreal-Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003. First published as "The Believer at the -Threshold of the Third Millennium." Suppl. to *Litterae Communionis – Tracce* 7 (1999).
- O'Donovan, Oliver. *The Problem of Self-Love in Augustine*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980.
- , *Desire of the Nations: Rediscovering the Roots of Political Theology*. Cambridge ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- , *Common Objects of Love: Moral Reflection and the Shaping of Community*. 2001 Stob Lectures. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002.
- , "The Political Thought of the *City of God* 19." *Bonds of Imperfection: Christian Politics, Past and Present*. Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004.
- Ochs, Peter. *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Okrent, Mark. *Rational Animals: The Teleological Roots of Intentionality*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007.
- The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Edited by Ted Honderich. 1995; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Paci, Massimo. *Mercato del lavoro e classi sociali*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1973.
- Paul VI. *Nostra Aetate*. Declaration of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. Vatican City, 1965. Numerous editions.
- , *Evangelii nuntiandi*. Evangelization in the Modern World. Vatican City, 1975. Numerous editions.
- Paterson, Holly Margaret. *Relationship of the educational pedagogy of Luigi Giussani to the American high school of the 21st century*. Ed.D. diss., University of San Francisco, 2000.
- Pickstock, Catherine. "Necrophilia: The Middle of Modernity, A Study of Death, Signs, and The Eucharist." In *Modern Theology* 12:4 (October, 1996): 405-433.
- Pinkard, Terry. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: The Sociality of Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. First published in 1994 by Cambridge University Press.
- Pius IX. *Syllabus Errorum*. Vatican City, 1864. Numerous editions.
- Pius X. *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. Encyclical on the doctrines of the

- modernists. Vatican City, 1907. Numerous editions.
- , *Motu Proprio Doctoris Angelici*. Vatican City, 1914. Numerous editions.
- Pius XI. *Studiorum Ducem*. Encyclical on St. Thomas Aquinas. Vatican City, 1923. Numerous editions.
- , *Non Abbiamo Bisogno*. Encyclical on Catholic Action in Italy. Vatican City, 1931. Numerous editions.
- , *Quadragesimo anno*. Encyclical on the Reconstruction of Social Order. Vatican City, 1931. Numerous editions.
- , *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*. Apostolic Constitution on universities and faculties of ecclesiastical schools. Vatican City, 1931. Numerous editions.
- Pius XII. *Humani Generis*. Encyclical letter concerning some false opinions threatening to undermine the foundations of Catholic Doctrine. Vatican City, 1950. Numerous editions.
- , *Miranda Prorsus*. Encyclical on Motion Pictures, Radio, and Television. Vatican City, 1957.
- , *Le Pelerinage de Lourdes*. Encyclical Warning Against Materialism. Vatican City, 1957.
- Pasini, C. and Spezzibottiani, M. *Il Seminario di Venegono 1935-1985*. Milan: Nuove Edizione Duomo, 1985.
- Paterson, Holly Margaret, "Relationship of the educational pedagogy of Luigi Giussani to the American high school of the 21st century." Ed.D. diss., University of San Francisco, 2000.
- Peddicord, Richard. *The Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Garrigou-Lagrange*. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2005.
- Philips, Robert L. "Communitarianism, the Vatican, and a New World Order." In *Ethics & International Affairs* 5.1 (2006): 135-147.
- Philipse, Herman. *Heidegger's Philosophy of Being: A Critical Interpretation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.
- Potworowski, Christophe. *Contemplation and Incarnation: The Theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001.
- Quash, Ben. "Drama and the Ends of Modernity." In *Balthasar at the End of Modernity*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999.
- Rahner, Karl. *Das Dynamische in der Kirche*. Freiburg: Herger, 1964. Translated by W. J. O'Hara as *The Dynamic Element in the Church*. Questiones Disputatae 12. Montreal: Palm Publishers, 1964. Citations to the Palm edition.
- , "The Hearer of the Message." *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. 1976; New York: Crossroad, 2004.
- Ratzinger, Joseph. "The Theological Locus of Lay Movements." In *Communio: International Catholic Review*. 25.3 (Fall 1998): 480-504.
- , "The Renewal of Moral Theology: Perspectives on Vatican II and *Veritatis Splendor*." *Communio: International Catholic Review* 32.2 (Summer 2005): 357-369.
- , "Funeral Homily for Msgr. Giussani." In *Communio: International Catholic Review* 31.4 (2004): 685-687.

- , *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*. San Francisco: Ignatius, 1987.
- Riske, M. "Cassian and Monastic Friendship." In *American Benedictine Review*. 12 (1961): 202-205.
- Robinson, Jonathan. *The Mass and Modernity: Walking Backwards to Heaven*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005.
- Rondoni, Davide. *Communion and Liberation: A Movement in the Church*. Translated by Patrick Stevenson and Susan Scott. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003.
- Rousselot, Pierre. *The Eyes of Faith*. Translated by Joseph Donceel. New York: Fordham University Press, 1990.
- , *L'intellectualisme de Saint Thomas*. Paris : G. Beauchesne, 1924.
- Rowland, Tracy. *Culture and the Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II*. London and New York: Routledge, 2003.
- , *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Rundle, Bede. *Wittgenstein and Contemporary Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.
- Sacro, Giorgio. "Da quale vita nasce Comunione e Liberazione." Interview in *Il Sabato*, May 1979. Reprint, *Un avvenimento di vita, cioè una storia: Itinerario di quindici anni concepiti e vissuti*. Ed. Carmine Di Martino. Milan: Il Sabato, 1993.
- Sagovsky, Nicholas. 'On God's Side: A Life of George Tyrrell'. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. *La nausea* Turin: Einaudi, 1990.
- Schindler, David C. *Han Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).
- Schindler, David L. *Heart of the World, Centre of the Church: Communio, Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.
- Scholz, Bernhard. "Il tuo lavoro è un opera: Al tempo della crisi, protagonisti della speranza." Keynote address, annual meeting of the Compagnia delle Opere, Teatro della gioventù, Genova, Liguria March 10, 2009.
- Schönborn, Christoph. "Preface." In *Il cammino al vero è un'esperienza*. Luigi Giussani. Milan: Rizzoli, 2006. 5-8.
- Schwartz, Daniel. *Aquinas on Friendship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Scola, Angelo. "Christian Experience." *Communio: International Catholic Review*, 23.2 (1996): 203-206.
- , *Un pensiero sorgivo sugli scritti di Luigi Giussani*. Milan: Marietti, 2004.
- "Sintesi ultimo simposi sulla libertà," May 15, 1968. Transcript, Communion and Liberation Archives, Via Nicola Antonio Porpora, 127, Milan.
- Smart, Ninian, et al. *Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought in the West*. Vol. 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Spaemann, Robert. *Persons: The Difference between 'Someone' and*

- '*Something*.' Oxford Studies in Theological Ethics. Translated by Oliver O'Donovan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Spinoza, Benedict de. *Ethics*. Translated by Andrew Boyle, and revised by G.H.R. Parkinson. London: Dent, 1989.
- Stern, David G. *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. First published in 2004 by Cambridge University Press.
- Stuart, Joseph. *Christopher Dawson in Context: A Study in British Intellectual History between the World Wars*. Ph.D. diss., University of Edinburgh, 2009, chapter 1.
- Szostek, Andrzej. "Karol Wojtyła's View of the Human Person." In *The Philosophy of Person: Solidarity and Cultural Creativity*. Polish Philosophical Studies, vol. 1. Edited by Józef Tischner, J. M. Ycizki, George F. McLean [[http://www.crvp.org/book/Series04/IVA-1/chapter\\_vii.htm#N\\_100\\_](http://www.crvp.org/book/Series04/IVA-1/chapter_vii.htm#N_100_)]. Accessed August 15, 2010.
- Tarkovskij, Andrej. *Andrej Rublëv* (Milan: Garzanti, 1992).
- Taylor, Charles. *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.
- . *The malaise of modernity*. Concord, Ont.: Anansi, 1991.
- . *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. Philosophical Papers 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. First published in 1985 by Cambridge UP.
- . *A Catholic Modernity?: Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture*. Edited by James L. Heft. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999.
- . *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Taylor, Jeremy. *A discourse of the nature, measure and offices of friendship*. London: Printed for R. Royston, 1671.
- Touchard, Jean. "L'Esprit des années 1930: Une Tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française." In *Tendances politiques de la vie française depuis 1789*. Paris: Hachette, 1960.
- Toulman, Stephen. *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- Torrell, Jean-Pierre. *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 2: *Spiritual Master*. Translated by Robert Royal. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003.
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, G.A. res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc A/810 at 71 (1948).
- Voegelin, Eric. *From Enlightenment to Revolution*. Edited by John H. Hallowell. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1975.
- Westberg, Daniel. *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas*. Oxford; New York : Oxford University Press, 1994.
- White, Caroline. *Christian Friendship in the Fourth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Wipple, John F. *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being*. Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2000.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Investigations*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Translated by G.

- E. M. Anscombe. First published in 1954 by Blackwell. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2001.
- Wojtyla, Karol. *Acta synodalia Concilii oecumenici Vaticani II*. 2nd ed. 1962-1965. Rome : Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1970-1999. Vol 3, part 2, 530-532; and vol. 4, part 2, 11-13.
- , "Radiation of Fatherhood. A Mystery." In *Collected Plays and Writings on Theatre*. Translated by Boleslaw Tabroski. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
- , *The Acting Person* in *Analecta Husserliana*. Edited by Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka. Translated by Andrzej Potocki. 1969; Dordrecht, Boston, London: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1979.
- , *Participation or Alienation. Person and Community, Selected Essays*. Translated by Theresa Sandok. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.
- , *Person and Community. Selected Essays*. Translated by Theresa Sandok. Edited by A. N. Woznicki. New York: Peter Lang, 1993.
- Zackariasson, Ulf. "Peirce, Pragmatism and the Logic of Scripture by Peter Ochs." *Ars Disputandi* [<http://www.ArsDisputandi.org>] 7 (2007). Accessed May 9, 2011.
- Zieba, Maciej. *The Surprising Pope: Understanding the Thought of John Paul II*. Translated by Karolina Weening. New York: Seabury Press, 1981.
- Zucchi, John. "Luigi Giussani, the Church and Youth in the 1950s." In *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 10:4 (Fall 2007): 130-150.